

Dominion or Domination?

Why do you think God created man [man=mankind, male & female]?
Was he lonely and needed someone to chat to?
What was man's role in creation?

At the end of each day God looks around at what he has made and sees that It was good. On Day 6 he sees that the land is a little empty, so creates living creatures. He could have left it there - a wonderfully beautiful zoo full of diversity and glory. He could have wandered in the garden in the cool of the day and, like Dr Doolittle, he could have "walked with the animals and talked with the animals."

BUT there was more!

We left Creation last week at the end of Day 5:

A world filled with colour and beauty, birdsong filling the air, sea and rivers teeming with fish -
AND IT WAS GOOD.

It conjures up an image of sitting beside a river with lush green vegetation of trees and plants and grasses, birdsong in the air - peace and beauty. Oh, how idyllic!

BUT GOD HAD NOT FINISHED

On Day 6 he was busier than ever -
His creative imagination ran riot -

And God said, 'Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: the livestock, the creatures that move along the ground, and the wild animals, each according to its kind.' And it was so. God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.

It is almost as if God paused there, looked around and thought, "Something is missing!"

'Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.'

*So God created mankind in his own image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.*

And God's verdict? "God saw everything that he had made, and it was very good."

But before we get to that final verdict God gives some instructions, which help us understand our place in Creation -

'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.'

God created mankind in his own image

There is plenty of theological debate as to what "made in God's image" means - the Hebrew word used is sometimes used of an idol that is a representation a god - perhaps one constructive way of understanding this verse is that **we are God's representatives** in this world, to act on his behalf. **Keep that in mind.**

Ponder it for a moment:

God has made this wonderful creation, beautiful, full of variety, intricate and well balanced. An amazing world that "IS GOOD" and is God's dominion and he says to mankind - "I am putting you in charge of my dominion, on my behalf, to rule in my name."

Imagine an amazing artist, equal to Rembrandt or Picasso, who has spent hours painting a glorious picture and as you admire it he says - it is yours!

Or someone has created a spectacular model railway and landscape, taking years over it, and says - look after this and enjoy it.

Or again - someone who has built up a rare breeds farm and they ask you to look after everything, "It is yours now. I am going abroad to do some more research."

How would you feel?

There are two words in v28 that describe the authority given to mankind:

We are to fill the earth and **SUBDUE** it. [*kabash*]

This is the stronger of the 2 commands - to subdue, conquer, bring into bondage. Here one thinks perhaps of man's efforts to use the power that exists in nature: wind, water, nuclear, yes, and fossil fuels; and to seek to control them and use them wisely and sensibly.

Perhaps after many millennia of existence we are just beginning to harness constructively the earth!

Then look at the rich resources that God has provided in the rocks. But surely it was never his intention that we should ravage the earth exhausting its wealth, and then polluting it with all our waste!

Remember - we are God's representatives - in the image of God - here on earth.

But then there is the relationship with other living things - we are to **RULE OVER** them.
[radah]

The word means to rule, reign, subjugate, have dominion over. Yes, having authority over, but surely in a beneficial way for the subjects. The image we should hold is that of a benign ruler, understanding the needs of his subjects. For surely this is how God views his creation?

Remember we are God's representatives - in the image of God.

Dominion -

the realm where responsibility is worked out
and where respect is earned and honoured.

We have been given a dominion by God -
Over the Earth and everything in it
but not so that we may abuse it.

As we saw last week: the earth and all that is in it has been made by God and it is good;
and he has entrusted the wonderful creation to the climax of his creation - mankind.
You and me.

Sadly too often we see domination -
mankind over creation
mankind destroying the habitat, and hence destroying the living creature He has made.
Even amongst ourselves - one race or people group over another.

We do not have to look far to see how domination has ravaged the earth's resources,
thinking that we can use and abuse the resources without thought to the consequences.

We do not have to look far to see how a disregard for the finely balanced ecology is reaping
its rewards.

As we extend this to our relationship with one another as members together of the human
race we again can see the damaging outcomes of exploitation and domination.

Jesus had some harsh words for those who exchanged their entrusted responsibility for
God's dominion for domination:

Matthew 21 - The Parable of the Tenants of the Vineyard

There are important lessons for us, and for the whole human race, concerning our place in
the Created Order.

Yes, we are the climax of Creation, but consequently we have the greatest responsibility for
the rest of Creation.

God has give us HIS authority over HIS creation, so we should seek to:

Subdue it, yes, harness its power

Rule over it, yes, but respect it as something that has only been "leased" to us.

We are God's representatives - made in his image.

And dare I suggest, we should seek to enhance it, as we share in God's creative nature.

The title for this week is "Dominion or Domination" - we know the answer to that do we not.

In fact the word "domination" does not occur in the Bible except in the sense of those nations who would capture and exploit the people of God, from whom, in time, God brought about release and freedom.

Peaceable harmony throughout all creation was how God made it and intended it. We will see in the coming weeks what went wrong and how things fell apart.

But let us not lose hope

The work of reconciliation has already begun with Christ's death on the Cross, bringing about the possibility of a reunion with God, and through him with one another and all creation.

So let us seek to do all we can to act justly in God's name to play our role in caring for HIS world on HIS behalf, so that it may remain GOOD, Very Good.

Psalm 8: 3 - 9 *As the Psalmist said:*

When I consider your heavens,
the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars,
which you have set in place,
what is mankind that you are mindful of them,
human beings that you care for them?
You have made them a little lower than the angels
and crowned them with glory and honour.
You made them rulers over the works of your hands;
you put everything under their feet:
all flocks and herds,
and the animals of the wild,
the birds in the sky,
and the fish in the sea,
all that swim the paths of the seas.
O Lord, our Lord,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!