

WHEN GOD SAID, “FILL THE EARTH AND SUBDUE IT” IS THIS WHAT HE MEANT?



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The earth is in trouble. Forests are disappearing. Rates of extinction for animals and plants are 1,000 times greater than before the industrial revolution. Every minute a garbage truck's worth of plastic slips into the world's oceans. By 2050 the amount of plastic by weight floating at various depths will equal the total amount of all fish (World Economic Forum report).

Recently, scientists have started calling our age the Anthropocene era – the first point in history in which humans have become the major environmental influence on the planet. Sadly, so much of our impact on the world is destructive of other forms of life.

Are we pleasing God? When God told us in Genesis - back in the first chapter of the first book of the bible, that we were to:

“Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

... did God want us to care for creatures other than ourselves? Did he want us to care for plants and ecosystems? Or should we just focus on increasing the human population?

The answer to these questions is found in the same chapter of Genesis. As God looked at each part of his creation he declared it to be good. Which means creation is not just good because it helps humans

survive and thrive. It is also good in and of itself – having both instrumental and intrinsic goodness. And because we humans have been given the task of ruling creation it's our responsibility to safeguard this intrinsic goodness. Which is terribly difficult. But then, making hard decisions is the lot of all rulers. As we balance competing interests, sacrifices will be inevitable.

Some may say that, since God promises 'a new heaven and a new earth' when Jesus returns, we shouldn't be too bothered about this world. After all, isn't it going to pass away? Yet that would be ignoring both God's command and basic common sense. You see, since we have no timetable for Jesus's return we must plan for both the short and long term. Indeed, our wait for Jesus could be millennia or much more. Are we really happy to leave a toxic and treeless planet for our children's children?

If you've only just realised the extent of your responsibility to God's creation then please take action where you can. It's your duty.

Prayer. Dear God, please help me to be a wise ruler of your creation every day as I wait for Jesus to return.

Bible verse. *“Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it.”* (Genesis 1:28)