

FILL THE EARTH AND SUBDUE IT LIKE MEN

Genesis 1:28

DOCTRINE: The Lord commands men to be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, subdue it, and take dominion over it.

TEXT: “And God blessed them. And God said to them, “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” (Genesis 1:28).

I. THE CREATION MANDATE IS THE VERY FIRST COMMAND GIVEN BY GOD TO MAN, AND IT SHOULD SHAPE EVERYTHING WE SEE AND DO

In this Creation Mandate, sometimes called The Cultural Mandate or The Dominion Mandate, the LORD commands you and I to:

I) *Be fruitful like men* (Genesis 1:28b). “Be fruitful.”

II) *Multiply like men* (Genesis 1:28c). “and multiply.”

III) *Fill the earth like men* (Genesis 1:28d). “and fill the earth.”

IV) *Subdue the earth like men* (Genesis 1:28e). “and subdue it.”

V) *Take dominion over lower creation like men* (Genesis 1:28f). “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.”

II. USE THESE TRUTHS FOR EXHORTATION

EXHORTATION I) *You and I must labor to be fruitful with whatever the LORD entrusts to us (Genesis 1:28:b).*

(I) *Labor to be fruitful with the vocational seed the Lord has entrusted to you.* Use the gifts and talents God has given your mind, body, and soul, to love him and neighbor in and through your job.

(II) *Labor to be fruitful with the gospel seed the Lord has entrusted to you.* Preach the gospel to the whole creation. Plant and water, trusting God to cause the growth (1 Corinthians 3:7).

(III) *Labor to be fruitful with the spiritual seed the Lord has entrusted to you.* Labor to “walk by the Spirit and...not gratify the desires of the flesh” (Galatians 5:16). Pray and strive to produce the fruit of the Spirit in all spheres of life. “Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control” (Galatians 5:22-23).

(IV) *Labor to be fruitful with the physical seed the Lord has given you.* Get married. Have lots of children, because they are a blessing (Psalm 127:3-5). “Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one's youth. Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them!” The Lord gives the reward, but men are said to fill their quivers. Which is it? Both. We act, trusting in the Lord's provision. Therefore, make it your aim to fill your quiver with as many arrows as possible so that you may be as blessed as possible. “Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them.” What would your life look like if you believed and acted like Psalm 127:5 were true?

II) *You and I must labor to multiply whatever the LORD entrusts to us (Genesis 1:28c).*

(I) Train your children to get married and have children, whether they be spiritual children or children in your home. This mandate is not about addition, this mandate is about multiplication. Therefore, do not just think about today and tomorrow. Think about 1,000 years from now. Train your children up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord, equipping them to do the same for their children and on and on it goes.

Let me tell you a story: A man named Max Jukes was born about the year 1720. Jukes was an atheist, who apparently married an ungodly woman. In the year 1900, an

American pastor and educator named Albert Edward Winship wrote a book entitled *Jukes-Edwards: A Study in Education and Heredity*. In this book he traced the descendants of the two men. What he found is sobering. Of Max Jukes' 540 studied descendants, 310 died in poverty, 150 were convicted criminals, there were 7 murderers, over 100 drunkards, and 190 female prostitutes.

By contrast, there was a man named Jonathan Edwards who was born in 1703. From Edwards' 1,394 studied descendants came an American vice-president, 3 senators, 3 governors, 3 mayors, 30 judges, 13 college presidents, 65 college professors, 100 lawyers, 60 physicians, 75 military officers, 100 preachers and missionaries, 60 prominent authors, and 80 other public officials.¹

What you do or do not do matters, men. It matters for more than just your lifetime and for more than your individual soul. If you are content with being a lazy Christian, what will the future look like? If you neglect family worship, what will your wife and children look like? If you do not train up your children in the way they should go, what will your descendants look like? Now imagine what God may do if you steadfastly sow seeds of faithfulness, seeking to multiply whatever God has entrusted to you? Who knows, your descendants may put Jonathan Edwards' to shame. What we know for sure is that Christ will definitely be praised. "Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus, throughout all generations, forever and ever, amen" (Ephesians 3:20-21).

(II) *Train those whom you disciple to disciple others also* (2 Timothy 2:2). "What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also." Again, this is multiplication, not addition.

III) *You and I must labor to fill the earth with the glory of the LORD* (Genesis 1:28d).

How do we take part in this filling of the earth? Well, follow this line of thought for a minute as we trace the entire story of the world: (I) Adam, with his helpmate Eve, was to fill the earth with image God's image bearers to reflect the glory of the Lord in all

1 . Robert Alan Ward - https://www.wmicentral.com/community_beat/religion/the-descendants-of-jonathan-edwards/article_9e54e16d-59c5-5cf2-a99f-dea187da978a.html

creation (1 Corinthians 11:7; Isaiah 43:6-7). 1 Corinthians 11:7 “[Man] is the image and glory of God,” Isaiah 43:6-7 “I will say to the north, Give up, and to the south, Do not withhold; bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the end of the earth, everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.” Adam was to fill the earth with image bearers of God who reflect his divine glory. (II) Because of the fall of man in Genesis 3, the image of God is marred (Genesis 6:11-13). Genesis 6:11-13: “The earth is filled with violence.” Adam’s failure is evident by the earth not being filled with God-glorifying image bearers, but rather being filled with violence. (III) Christ, the greater Son of David, even that greater Adam, is promised to truly make it so that the earth is filled with the Lord’s glory (Psalm 72:19; Isaiah 11:9; Habakkuk 2:14). Psalm 72:19: “Blessed be his glorious name forever; may the whole earth be filled with his glory! Amen and Amen!” Isaiah 11:9: “They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.” Habakkuk 2:14: “For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.”

QUESTION. Who or what is Christ going to fill the earth with?

ANSWER. With those who have the image of God restored in them (Ephesians 4:24-25). “Put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.”

QUESTION. How will the earth be filled with restored image bearers?

ANSWER. By Christ fulfilling the first half of the Great Commission.

(IV) Christ, with his helpmate the Church, is filling the earth with restored image bearers to reflect the glory of the Lord in all creation (Matthew 28:18-20). “And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...’ Christ, with us at his side, is bringing to fruition the “fill the earth” mandate as the greater Adam through the first half of the great commission!

Therefore, make it your aim to labor to fill the earth with the glory of the Lord by obeying the first half of the great commission.

IV) *You and I must labor to subdue the earth for the glory of the LORD (Genesis 1:28e).*

QUESTION I. How do we subdue the earth and take dominion?

ANSWER. By filling the earth with those who glorify and enjoy God.

QUESTION II. How can I glorify God?

ANSWER. By loving him and obeying his commands (*The Baptist Catechism for Boys and Girls*).

QUESTION III. How will people love God and obey his commands?

ANSWER. By you and I fulfilling the second half of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:20). “Teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” *Christ, with us at his side, is bringing to fruition the “subdue the earth” mandate as the greater Adam through the second half of the great commission!*

Therefore, make it your aim to labor to subdue the earth for the glory of the Lord by obeying the second half of great commission, teaching the nations to do everything Christ the King commands.

V) *You and I must labor to over lower creation for the glory of the LORD (Genesis 1:28d).* We need to look at all things in lower creation, such as the earth and the animals, as assets to be used to glorify God and enjoy him forever.

III. USE THESE TRUTHS FOR INSTRUCTION

INSTRUCTION I) *Christ will subdue the entire earth, either by converting or killing his enemies (Psalm 2:7-12).* “I will tell of the decree: The Lord said to me, ‘You are my

Son; today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. *You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.* Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. *Blessed are all who take refuge in him.*”

II) *The once-crucified now-resurrected Christ is filling the earth with his restored image bearers and subduing his enemies even right now (1 Corinthians 15:20-26).* “But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. *For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.* But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father *after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.* The last enemy to be destroyed is death” (emphasis mine).

III) *On the new Earth, the earth will be as Adam was commanded to make it, filled with the glory of the Lord (Revelation 21:22-27; Revelation 22:1-2).* "And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, *for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb.* By its light will the nations walk, and *the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it,* and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. *They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations.* But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life. . . Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, *the tree of life* with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations” (emphasis mine).

IV. USE THESE TRUTHS FOR DIRECTION

Do not allow yourself to be overwhelmed. Here are four basic directions:

DIRECTION I) *Start with yourself.* You personally need to be brought into subjection to Christ. You are responsible for yourself. You need to be disciplined and fruitful with what the Lord has given you. Ask yourself and others, *How can I best use what God has given me to be a fruitful man in subjection to Christ? What would it look like if you submitted to Christ as King?* Pray and labor for that.

II) *Next is your home.* Your home and all who are under your authority need to be brought into subjection to Christ. You are responsible for your home, men. As the men go, so goes the home. Ask yourself and others, *How can I best be fruitful and multiply while bringing my household into subjection to Christ? What would it look like if our home submitted to Christ as King?* Pray and labor for that.

III) *Next is the Church.* The church and all who are apart of her need to be brought into subjection to Christ. As the home goes, so goes the church. Ask yourself and others, *How can we best be fruitful, multiply, and fill and the earth through our labors as the Bride of Christ? What would our Church look like if we submitted to Christ as King?* Pray and labor for that.

IV) *Next is society.* The entire earth must be brought into subjection to Christ. Business, government, finance, agriculture, media, all of it. As the church goes, so goes society. Ask yourself and others, *What can I do in society to take part in bringing the earth into subjection to Christ? What would the earth look like if all submitted to Christ as King?* Pray and labor for that.

CONCLUSION

The Lord commands men to be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, subdue it, and take dominion over it (Genesis 1:28). “Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes” (Matthew 24:46).

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