

RULING: How does the Bible view the rule of humans over creation?

Radah means:

Kabash means:

Genesis 1:28 (NET)

God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply! Fill the earth and subdue it! Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and every creature that moves on the ground."

The language of these verses has been used to justify violently subduing the earth, and viewing it as existing for our unlimited use and consumption. Is this what was intended? Is there a case for reading it differently?

Genesis 1:26-27 (NET)

Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, after our likeness, so they may rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move on the earth."

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

What does this passage add to our understanding of what it means in Genesis to "rule over"?

Consider:

- How are humans to image God?
- How does God rule?

Psalm 72:8,12-14 (NET)

*May he rule (radah) from sea to sea,
and from the Euphrates River to the ends of the earth!*

...

*For he will rescue the needy when they cry out for help,
and the oppressed who have no defender.
He will take pity on the poor and needy;
the lives of the needy he will save.
From harm and violence he will defend them;
he will value their lives.*

Psalm 145:9 (NET)

The Lord is good to all, and has compassion on all he has made.

What is the picture of ruling in Psalm 72 and 145?

STEWARDSHIP: the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care.

Shamar means:

'abad means:

Genesis 2:15,19 (NET)

The LORD God took the man and placed him in the orchard in Eden to care for (shamar) it and to maintain ('abad) it... The LORD God formed out of the ground every living animal of the field and every bird of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them, and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name.

What do these verses add to our picture of how humans were intended to rule?

The picture of human stewardship of creation in Genesis includes:

- Ruling creation in God's image; showing what God is like (kind, just, compassionate)
- Subduing the dangers of creation, working to meet our needs (building homes; using resources wisely and sustainably; creating culture—art, music, technology), and having children to continue this task
- Lovingly caring for, preserving, and serving this creation; knowing it so we can know how to care for it

Does the New Testament see this the same way?

Mark 10:42-44 (NET)

Jesus called them and said to them, "You know that those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those in high positions use their authority over them. But it is not this way among you. Instead whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you must be the slave of all."

How did Jesus talk about and model ruling over others?

How does Jesus's view of authority relate to how Genesis views ruling?