



[Genesis 1:26](#)

(26) And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

[Genesis 1:28](#)

(28) And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

[Genesis 2:15](#)

(15) And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.

King James Version

To environmentalists, letting man have *dominion* over the animals and being told to *subdue* the earth means that [God](#) gives man free rein to do anything he wants to the planet—bend it to his uses and abuses, rape it of all its beauty and diversity—for his own benefit. "Does not the land have any rights?" they cry. "What about the plants and animals, birds and fish? What gives us the right to mine and burn and kill without care for nature?"

Certainly, God did not give man the authority to degrade and destroy His earth. Environmentalists are correct in saying that mankind should consider and address environmental concerns. They are quite wrong, however, to blame God for the earth's ecological problems; He is not responsible for *man's* destruction of the natural world.

To think that God gave man carte blanche to plunder and destroy the earth is simply

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ludicrous. He is its Creator! Why would He immediately command Adam to ruin it? Would any woodworker, upon just finishing a beautifully stained piece of furniture, tell his son to break it up for firewood? No! Just as God desires for His creation, the woodworker would put his handiwork to use and also care for it by keeping it waxed and dusted to prolong its life.

This is exactly what God told Adam. Genesis 2 contains a parallel account of creation, adding detail to certain parts of the narrative of the first chapter. Notice God's expanded instruction: "Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the [garden of Eden](#) to *tend* [dress, KJV] and *keep it*" (verse 15). This greatly modifies the force of "have dominion" and "subdue it" from [Genesis 1:26](#), 28!

Tend (Hebrew *'abad*) means "to work or serve," and thus referring to the ground or a garden, it can be defined as "to till or cultivate." It possesses the nuance seen in the KJV's choice in its translation: "dress," implying adornment, embellishment, and improvement.

Keep (Hebrew *shamar*) means "to exercise great care over." In the context of [Genesis 2:15](#), it expresses God's wish that mankind, in the person of Adam, "take care of," "guard," or "watch over" the garden. A caretaker maintains and protects his charge so that he can return it to its owner in as good or better condition than when he received it.

To Noah, God gives a similar command after the Flood:

So God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them: "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth. And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be on every beast of the earth, on every bird of the air, on all that move on the earth, and on all the fish of the sea. They are given into your hand. ([Genesis 9:1-2](#))

Once again God gives man dominion over all other life on the earth, and with this renewed authority comes the implicit responsibility to tend and keep what was explicitly given to Adam. In this post-Flood world, God gives mankind a [second chance](#) to use and preserve the resources He had so abundantly provided. To that end Noah, after 120 years as a preacher and shipwright, took up farming and planted a vineyard (verse 20). We can assume, from what we know of human nature, that this attitude of stewardship did not pass to very many of his descendants.

— Richard T. Ritenbaugh

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