



“Subdue the Earth”: Physical Labor Keeps Gradual Entropy under Control; the Earth Is God’s Storehouse of Matériel for Our Use & Enjoyment, Gen 1:28; 2:15

- 7) Human authority over the earth and its resources is mentioned in verse 28 by the phrase, “fill the earth and subdue it.”
- 8) The word “subdue” is the Qal imperative of **כָּבַשׁ** *kavash* and its definition does not vary among the Hebrew stems; it always means “to subdue” or “to conquer.”

Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, 11th ed., s.v. “subdue”:

To conquer and bring into subjection; vanquish; to bring under control especially by an exertion of the will; to bring (land) under cultivation.

Webster, Noah. *An American Dictionary of the English Language*. Vol. 2: s.v. “subdue.” (New York: S. Converse, 1828). Reprint. San Francisco: Foundation for American Christian Education, 1995:

To conquer by force or the exertion of superior power, and bring into permanent subjection; to reduce under dominion. Subduing implies *conquest* or *vanquishing*, but it implies also more permanence of subjection to the conquering power, than either of these words.

Merriam-Webster’s, s.v. “conquer”:

To gain mastery over or win by overcoming obstacles or opposition; to overcome by mental or moral power; to be victorious.

Webster, *An American Dictionary*, s.v. “conquer”:

To subdue; to reduce, by physical force, till resistance is no longer made; to overcome; to vanquish.

To gain by force; to win; to take possession by violent means; to gain dominion or sovereignty over, as the subduing of the power of an enemy generally implies possession of the persons or thing subdued by the conqueror. To overcome, as difficulties; to surmount, as obstacles; to subdue whatever opposes.

- 9) The use of the word *kavash* has several applications as can be noted from the English definitions. For example we find the word used to describe the taking of the land under Joshua.
- 10) Two tribes, Reuben and Gad, did not desire to go into the land but rather expressed a desire to remain in Transjordan. Moses objected to this idea because it would serve as a discouragement to the other ten tribes. His condition for them being able settle in Transjordan was for them to arm themselves and help take the land of Canaan and if successful they could then return to the east of the Jordan free of obligation to the Lord and Israel. Moses made this offer in:

Numbers 32:20 - So Moses said to them [**Reuben and Gad**], “If you will do this, if you will arm yourselves before the Lord for the war,

Numbers 3:21 - and all of you armed men cross over the Jordan before the Lord until He has driven His enemies out from before Him,

v. 22 - and the land is subdued [**כָּבַשׁ** *kavash*] before the Lord, then afterward you shall return and be free of obligation toward the Lord and toward Israel, and this land shall be yours for a possession before the Lord.

- 11) David in an appeal to the people of Israel to help build Solomon’s Temple, David reminds them of how the Lord subdued the land on their behalf in:



1 Chronicles 22:18 - "Is not the Lord your God with you? And has He not given you rest on every side? For He has given the inhabitants of the land into my hand, and the land is subdued before the Lord and before His people."

12) A summary of the uses of *kavash* in the Old Testament is provided by:

Botterweck, G. Johannes, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry (eds.). *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*. Translated by David E. Green. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.,1995), 7:54:

In all these passages the "land" is not to be thought of in literal (e.g., agrarian) terms, but as the whole territory shaped by human habitation, as an historical entity. To "subdue" it means primarily to conquer and subdue its previous population, but also to make use of all the economic and cultural potential associated with the concept of "land."

The concept of *ha'aretz* (the earth) receives its broadest semantic extension in Genesis 1:28 where God blesses the man and woman and commands them to subdue *ha'aretz* (the earth) after it has been filled through human fertility.

- 13) The application to Genesis 1:28 is clear: man is to conquer the earth. It is to become subservient to the human race for its logistical support. The purpose and application for man's conquering of the earth and its resources is to rein in entropy by the "sweat of his brow."
- 14) Entropy is controlled by human intervention into "natural processes." If you do not tend a garden it will not become more productive by means of the "survival of the fittest," "natural selection," or "natural processes."
- 15) A garden left unattended will be overwhelmed by weeds and parasites, the ground must be tilled and fertilized, dead growth must be pruned, harvests must occur on schedule. A lazy farmer who wouldn't hoe his corn will find his corn was lost.
- 16) After God placed Adam in the garden of Eden the first duties issued to him are found in:

Genesis 2:15 - Then the Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it [עָבַד *'avath*: to work, develop, cultivate; also, to serve] and keep it [שָׁמַר *shamar*: to watch over, care for, preserve].

- 17) It was Adam's responsibility to manage the garden's resources. This required mostly supervision with a minimum of maintenance.
- 18) However, after the fall he was forced to intensify these responsibilities due to the entropy which occurred within the creation.
- 19) Jesus Christ is the Person of the Trinity whose omnipotence holds the universe together. This power maintained the original creation in a status quo of perfection with no entropy.
- 20) But Lucifer's sin resulted in the Lord releasing the universe to a state of total entropy called "inert uniformity" or "complete randomness."
- 21) Following the sin of Adam the Lord continues to hold the universe together but permits gradual entropy to creep toward uniformity and randomness.
- 22) This gradual entropy is designed to maintain conditions in the universe so that life can be supported on Planet Earth until perfection is restored at the Second Advent.
- 23) In the meantime, because of advancing entropy man is delegated authority over the earth and is to use his ingenuity, imagination, and creativity to control the increasing chaos that surrounds him.



- 24) Radical environmentalists wish to restrain the use and development of natural resources. But their logic is flawed. For example, they claim untapped fields of oil and gas must not be exploited because their use would mean future generations would be deprived of their use.
- 25) But at the same time they predict that the earth will be around for another several billion years before entropy results in destroying the human race.
- 26) Consequently, under their logic, no generation could tap new oil and gas preserves in good conscience.
- 27) The opposite is true. Man's mandate is to conquer the environment and establish his duly appointed dominion over its resources: animal, vegetable, and mineral.
- 28) Beginning in the perfect environment of Eden and continuing until the universal flood of Genesis 7, man was given permission to eat any and all of the earth's flora for sustenance.