

Is There a Dominion Mandate? Reply: A Response to Hennigan, Kulikovsky, and McDurmon

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Abstract

Darek Isaacs responds to the challenges to his paper, "Is there a dominion mandate?" This discussion explores the differences between blessings and commandments in light of how their distinctions would impact the understanding of the so-called dominion mandate. This discussion explores the nature of reproduction and how the outcome of reproduction is a result of the blessing of the womb, and not a result of obeying a command to multiply. Isaacs presents views that reject the idea that modern medicines, buildings, and technologies are a demonstration of the Adamic dominion, but rather such responses to an adverse environment are signs that man's rule and authority is not being recognized and defense mechanisms need to be built as a result. Ultimately, Isaacs argues that the Adamic dominion is defunct, and dominion has been given to the Messiah.

Keywords: dominion, dominion mandate, commands, blessings, prophecy, fruitful and multiply, Kulikovsky, McDurmon, Isaacs, Hennigan, dominion of darkness, dominion of sin, dominion of Messiah, Messiah, Adamic dominion, sovereignty, control

Introduction

An interesting group of three challengers have surfaced to my dominion mandate paper. I am pleased to have the opportunity to respond.

First Response: To Thomas Hennigan

It is not my intent to be overly argumentative, for that is not the way of the believer. But, I do want to be thorough in the presentation of why the dominion of Adam completely failed and was lost at the introduction of sin.

Hennigan's initial ten-point assessment of my position is spot on. His assessment is confirmation for the clarity of my paper. He not only understood the progression of the argument, but also understood the biblical data points.

Hennigan argued, however, that my definition of dominion was too narrow. But I disagree. It is not that my definition is needlessly narrow; rather, I did not allow open-ended speculation to expand the boundaries of the original dominion as defined in Genesis 1:26–28.

My definition, as one can read about in the original paper, was a very literal understanding of Adam having rule and authority over the creation. Hennigan et al, have however, argued for a broader meaning to dominion that is not explicitly defined in the original text of Genesis 1:26–28.

Hennigan wrote:

In my opinion, this is an extremely narrow application of *rādā* and therefore the plethora of examples used to bolster his argument is only relevant if his narrow definition is correct. (Hennigan 2013, p. 137)

The Hebrew is very clear. Adam and Eve (for it was

a plural appointment) were given rule and authority over the animals and over the natural creation. There was a specific construct given to them about this rule. My approach to dominion was a disciplined approach. I adhered to the literal text. I did not imply anything beyond what is stated in the biblical text. This is a very clean way of reading Scripture.

As I demonstrated in my original paper, such an approach harvested a cohesive, simple, and complete view of dominion that makes sense when the entire counsel of the Word of God is taken into account. Furthermore, my disciplined understanding of dominion is confirmed by the naturalistic evidence of man not demonstrating authority over creatures and nature (Isaacs 2013, pp. 1–16). In fact, I would find it hard pressed to even imagine an argument that could demonstrate how man has authority over the fish in the sea. If we had such authority, one would think that we would not need to hide a hook in the body of a worm to trick a fish into biting.

The fact is, Adam was given rule and authority over the creatures and creation in a perfect world without sin, rebellion, and struggle. However, it is possible for one to ask, "What did that dominion look like when it was exercised by a person with dominion?"

This is why it is so important to look at Yeshua for the answer, because we need an example of perfect man who walks in rule and authority. The Bible is redundant (as I demonstrated in the original paper) that all dominion and authority was given to Yeshua.

Therefore, Yeshua is the example of a perfect man walking with dominion. Also, it is of no small importance that Yeshua is called the last Adam.

The similarities between Yeshua and Adam are as important as the differences. Both had no earthly father. Both had dominion given to them, which is the most obvious conflict with mankind retaining Adam's dominion, when all dominion was subsequently given to Yeshua (Matthew 28:18; Hebrews 2:8; 1 Peter 5:11; Revelation 1:6).

The first Adam was given authority over the creation, but then he sinned. The last Adam was given this authority and then went on to exhibit this authority over creation. He commanded the waters to be calm, and they were calm. He commanded a tree to wither, and it withered. Our Messiah provided the picture of rule and authority over nature. One may assert however, that these acts of authority are better defined as an expression of Messiah's deity rather than an expression of dominion. But, this point could only be argued if other men were incapable of enacting this same kind of authority over nature. But, man is capable, through Messiah's dominion, to do mighty works like our Messiah did.

Luke 17:6 speaks to this authority over nature that is possible of man, through the Messiah, if we have such faith.

So the LORD said, "If you have faith as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be pulled up by the roots and be planted in the sea,' and it would obey you."

Messiah tells us that a tree would obey us, if we had faith. This is rule and authority over the creation, which is dominion.

The point that I make in my original paper, which I will augment here, is that it is possible to operate within a redeemed dominion through the Messiah (but not the original Adamic dominion, which I argue is defunct).

Our Messiah empowered the twelve to operate within his dominion in Luke 9:1. Part of that authority was over natural diseases (which consequently demonstrates Messiah's victory/authority over sin).

Then He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases.

Man also has shown the ability to have authority over death, through the dominion of the Messiah. Acts 9:40 states:

But Peter put them all out, and knelt down and prayed. And turning to the body he said, "Tabitha, arise." And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up.

That is true dominion. This is perfect authority. In remarkable fashion, the Messiah even claimed His followers could do even greater things than what He had done (John 14:12).

These are incredible acts using the faith of the supernatural that allows the authority over the natural, through the dominion of Messiah.

Let us not lessen what rule and authority over nature really is just because it is hard to imagine having that kind of command and authority. Let us not allow the fallen, sinful world to taint our understanding of rule and authority. I believe, much of this dominion debate occurs because we have grossly underestimated how perfect the beginning creation really was and the loftiness of the position that Adam and Eve held.

Hennigan's Key Evidence

In this discussion, Hennigan actually brought forth an extraordinary piece of evidence. It was critical that a credentialed individual wrote what he wrote. For, it confirms an important point that I made in the original paper; which is, mankind does not appear to have dominion over nature. Yet, dominion over nature is specifically the construct of the original dominion given to Adam in Genesis 1:28.

Hennigan confirms this point.

He wrote:

There is no question that when I work with animals, I need to play by their rules, so that I don't get hurt and I don't hurt them. (Hennigan 2013, p. 137)

Hennigan is correct. There is no question. We have to play by their rules. This is not open to dispute. The situation is abundantly clear. Because Hennigan is an expert with animals, he was able to understand my line of argumentation about wildlife in the original paper.

I admit, if someone has not worked with wild animals (or even the so-called domesticated creatures), it is possible that they might not understand some of my argumentation about the severe threat to our lives that these animals can pose.

I grew up in the heart of agriculture amongst large domesticated animals (bovine and equine). I have also spent considerable time in Africa amongst the wild African animals. I grew up understanding and witnessing that animals are always a threat if their boundaries are not respected. This is why I criticized "document apologists," and the theologians, who are so far removed from the outdoors. Their theology is imprisoned by their own lifestyle. Therefore, I am pleased that Hennigan's professional expertise is documented.

In Hennigan's professional, highly credentialed opinion of working with wild animals, we need "to play by their rules." We are forced to do this precisely because they do not respect ours. Even when a rancher is forced to pull a calf out of a cow during a hard delivery, at any moment, that cow can turn on the very people trying to help them and charge them. This happened to me. I would have been seriously injured or killed if I had not been endowed with swift feet.

Nature does not give us a picture of mankind having rule or dominion. Rather, we are forced to respond to very real threats that are in objection to what we want to accomplish.

The simple existence of such threats is a testimony that our rule and authority is not recognized. We have items we want to accomplish, and we are forced to accomplish them without a functioning dominion.

Furthermore, just because we are often capable of adjusting our methods to defeat the animal's instinctive actions, one should not confuse this to mean that we have rule or authority. It just means that we got the upper hand in those cases. However, this is no different than the myriad of times where the animals get the upper hand over people, and consequently hurt and/or kill people.

If we explore the nuances of dominion a bit further, is it a fair position to bifurcate the possession of dominion with the exercising of that dominion? Meaning, could mankind still maintain some sort of dominion, via the Adamic dominion, but not be able to effectively exercise it due to sin? If this were true, then the idea that man maintains the original dominion, but we simply labor to exercise it would, theoretically, be acceptable for those wanting to maintain a dominion mandate.

But, I do not see how possession and the exercising of dominion can be separated from each other. First of all, these ideas about Adam's dominion still being intact have to be cross-checked with authority on earth being given to Messiah (Matthew 28:18 et al). Secondly, fallen man is still in bondage to the dominion of sin (Romans 6:14). So, it is a very difficult proposition to argue for the dominion of Adam, when fallen man is under the dominion of sin. Thirdly, man cannot serve two masters (Luke 16:13). So, how can redeemed man still act within Adam's dominion, when they have been transferred into the dominion of Messiah (Colossians 1:13)?

Those theological points, from my perspective, are trump cards in this discussion. However, for the sake of being thorough, let us discuss having possession of something but not being able to effectuate it.

I understand, since I am pressing a position that is contrary to many theologians that a burden of proof may rest on me to demonstrate how fallen man cannot retain any dominion whatsoever. I accept this as I have used ample Scripture to press this point, but here is an additional extra-biblical argument to demonstrate fallen man cannot retain any dominion whatsoever outside of being redeemed by Messiah.

One could argue that, yes, something can be possessed but it may not be able to be operated. But the problem is, an inoperable possession becomes a dead weight.

Therefore, if people are very driven to hold on to Adam's dominion by claiming that they have possession of it, but cannot exercise it, then they are making the case that their dominion is like a paralyzed arm. They have the arm, but it is of no use.

But, why have a theology that argues for a paralyzed arm? Especially when the plain reading of Scripture places fallen man under the dominion of sin, the fallen world, under the god of this world (2 Corinthians 4:4), and redeemed man is in the dominion of Messiah. Why ignore that progression of dominion, which is explained so clearly in Scripture, so that we can retain the belief in a paralyzed arm?

But going even further, is rule and authority an item to possess? Is rule and authority possible if it is paralyzed? Isn't rule and authority only demonstrated as a result of effective action?

In terms of governance, which is what dominion was over the animals and nature, possession of dominion and exercising of dominion are absolutely dependent upon each other for each other's existence. For if one cannot demonstrate rule and authority, then one does not have rule or authority. Dominion was not an item, it was a reality. Without the reality of dominion, there is no dominion to be claimed.

What we witness in nature are simply combatants on a field of play with a winner and loser each time. We do not see the exercising of rule and authority, and therefore, we cannot have any kind of possession of rule and authority if we cannot exercise it. For dominion is not an item, but a position evidenced by successful action.

The animal kinds have an agenda, which is to eat, sleep, mate, flee, or fight. Likewise, mankind has many agendas that we want to impose on the animals. These can be to eat, poach, skin, give medicine to, track, and/or raise as livestock, etc.

With each encounter between man and animal, there is victor and a loser. Sometimes man gets to do what man wants to do. But, sometimes the animals get away, or kill people. Again, this field of combat is not indicative of man having dominion. Rather, we view competing agendas with a victor and loser each time.

Hennigan continued:

Why would an ecologist go to these lengths with an animal? It is because they care about them. Why do they care? In most cases it is because man's ungodly dominion has globally affected their well-being, including the biggest and strongest. (Hennigan 2013, p. 137)

First of all, the argument of an ungodly dominion would be, on face value something different than the original godly dominion given to Adam before there was sin or suffering.

Also, caring for animals is fantastic. But, loving something does not give one dominion over them.

Hennigan wrote:

But with the proper safety procedures and human technology even the most dangerous creatures, like the polar bear or tiger, can be completely subdued so that their general health can be appraised and/or radio collars applied. (Hennigan 2013, p. 137)

But, having to painfully inject a medicine that stops the bodily processes of a creature, so that testing on the creature can be done, is not the sign of dominion. It is the precise sign of lack of dominion. This is because a polar bear does not recognize our rule or authority and would kill people if we did not attack them first, rendering them incapacitated.

Many of our actions that we think are dominion are actually the response of not having a functional dominion. Needing to sedate wildlife is one of those things.

Hennigan also wrote:

If we have the technological know-how and power to affect the very existence of creatures and ecosystems on the planet, we also have the power to help them. Is that not considered limited dominion (ruling or prevailing)? (Hennigan 2013, p. 137).

Hennigan has appealed to a limited dominion. But, what is a limited dominion? How is it partitioned and exhibited? What is the scope? What are the limitations? As one can see, appealing for a limited dominion opens up too much speculation on what exactly it is.

Furthermore, any argument for an undefined limited dominion is an argument that the original dominion was lost, because the two would not be, at face value, the same thing.

Going further then, if the original dominion, and the so-called limited dominion are not the same thing, then who has the authority to define a limited dominion?

According to Hennigan's definition of limited dominion, the power to affect existence is a defining measure of limited dominion. If that is the standard, then nearly everything on the planet has dominion because of the interdependent relationships of all of nature.

As one can see, as soon as the literal definition of dominion is marginalized, the original dominion becomes a product of whatever idea man applies to it. This was actually the red flag that I noticed. At the beginning of my original paper, I cited a handful of uses of the dominion mandate, and many were so broad when contrasted with Genesis 1:26–28, that I believed a more precise, and more biblical understanding of dominion was in order. Hopefully, I have helped do that with this discussion.

Hennigan's Six Points

After Hennigan's general comments, he provided six points of argumentation.

Hennigan's #1

1. With the proper understanding and management techniques, ecologists can prevail over the death and disease of unhealthy forests and make them productive and healthy again. (Hennigan 2013, p. 138)

I do not think that ecologists can prevail over death or disease. All things die, and "band aids," if one allows the metaphor, are the only thing we are capable of applying.

Furthermore, doing acts of good is not the same thing as rule and authority. Also, Hennigan seems to suggest that through technology, we can act out some sort of measured dominion.

However, technology progresses because we are trying to overcome hardships of various kinds. The fact that we have to overcome so much is an argument that our rule and authority is not recognized by nature.

Furthermore, forest fires often rage out of our control. How can it be argued that on the one hand we have dominion because we "save" forests, but on the other hand, it is ignored that forest fires pay no attention to man and man just hopes to limit the damage?

If we consider the whole of nature, what we witness are various kinds of combatants on a field of play with winners and losers each time. We do not witness a rule or authority of man over nature.

Hennigan's #2

2. In countries with proper medical treatment, human research has produced medicines that have prevailed against many scourges of history like malaria, small pox, and yellow fever that wiped out people by the millions. As image bearers [saved or unsaved] does this not reflect God's compassion and desire to minimize suffering in a fallen world? (Hennigan 2013, p. 138)

Medicines are created because diseases attack humanity. The fact that we need defense mechanisms against nature is a telltale sign that we do not have rule or authority over nature. Also, as I wrote in the original paper, we have many diseases that kill. Victory over one should not be seen as dominion over them all. And does anyone think that mankind will eventually eradicate disease? Probably not many Bible believers.

Also, Hennigan has referenced the Image of God. I have treated dominion separately from the Image of God in this discussion. There is good reason for that. I believe the Bible treats them separately.

Genesis 1:26 states:

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness;...

The Image of God, in a sense, is line item one, and then here comes line item two.

...let them have dominion...

Secondly, I treated them differently because I cited multiple theological references (in the original paper) that demonstrated that the Image of God is, in all reality, an unknown entity to the theological community at this present time. Therefore, to enter into speculation on it at this point would not be prudent in my estimation.

Hennigan's #3

3. Many environmental naturalists think humans are the scourge of the globe because they detrimentally prevail over many organisms and cause global endangerment, extinction, and pollution events. They see an unfair advantage in mankind and are worried that we will destroy the planet. (Hennigan 2013, p. 138)

Mankind has already destroyed this planet through Adam's sin; for the world is being kept now for destruction (2 Peter 3:7, 11–13). Our hope is not in this life or this earth. We need to reach the unbeliever with the gospel, to the Jew first, and then the Gentile (Romans 1:16).

Hennigan's #4

4. Communities have harnessed energy from the sun, water falls, oil, natural gas, and geothermic activity in order to provide easy access to energy for people. This form of energy has helped people prevail against the hardships and heart aches of living in squalid, post-Fall survival conditions, where only fire was used as a heat, cooking, and light source. (Hennigan 2013, p. 138)

If we did not have squalid, post-Fall conditions, we would not need to create defense mechanisms against a natural world that will not obey our authority. We must understand that the response to, and even the survival of an attack, does not show dominion. It just simply means we have learned to survive. Learning to survive in an environment is a far cry from having rule over an environment.

Hennigan's #5

5. Many communities have eliminated wild animal threats and have tamed the local environment enough to be mostly safe for children to play in. (Hennigan 2013, p. 138)

But many have not eliminated the wild animal threats, and the very presence of wild animals is a testimony against man having dominion. Therefore, we see combatants on a field of play with winners and losers with each encounter.

In fact, one child being killed against its will by an animal predator should be enough to break the concept of Adam's dominion over the creatures and nature. When there is definite data against a theory, the theory fails.

Hennigan's #6

6. There is no question that parasitism (long term relationships between two separate organisms resulting in one being harmed while the other benefits) is a constant agricultural battle when trying to produce healthy crops. But long term mutual relationships where both organisms benefit are far more common, such as the soil dwelling mycorrhizal fungus relationships with plants. Researchers have learned to use these relationships in order to bioremediate lands destroyed by chemical pollution. (Hennigan 2009). (Hennigan 2013a, p. 138)

Cooperating with nature to achieve mutual benefit is good, but it is not dominion. Dominion was not a concept; it is control. It was not an idea; rather it is an authority.

I appreciate Hennigan's approach to his response, and though I differ with the position he advanced, I appreciate that he took the time to consider what I wrote.

Second Response: To Andrew Kulikovskiy

Andrew Kulikovskiy had a response to my paper on the dominion mandate. I am pleased to have an opportunity to respond.

Commands and Consequences

Kulikovskiy, offered this statement about my article:

According to him [Isaacs], the text must explicitly state that a command is being issued and there must be a consequence specified if the command is not obeyed. Isaacs cites Genesis 2:16–17 as an example. Thus, by Isaacs's reasoning, God did not really command the Israelites to have no other gods (Exodus 20:3) nor did he command Abram to leave his country (Genesis 12:1) since neither of these texts (along with countless other clear commands) explicitly state that a command is being issued, nor do they specify a direct consequence if the command is disobeyed. (Kulikovskiy 2013, p. 139)

I believe he is overstating his case. What I actually argued is that dominion was an appointment by God and not a commandment. I also argued that it was part of a list of blessings, not a list of commands. The phrase that I use to establish this seemingly controversial position is the phrase in Genesis 1:28, "Them God blessed them,..."

Then, in the overall argumentation, I demonstrated that there were unique features that differentiated

the blessings in Genesis chapter one from being commandments. Not the least of which, was the phrase designating the list as blessings (see Isaacs 2013).

Furthermore, in his critique of me, he claimed that I would not think the commandment to have no other gods was actually a commandment because God did not give a clear consequence for not obeying that commandment. But, Kulikovsky is in error.

Deuteronomy 5:6–9

I am the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

You shall have no other gods before Me.

You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. *For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me,...* (emphasis added)

Verse nine is the consequence for disobeying the opening commandments. The consequence is God visiting iniquity upon them and their children. That is a pretty serious consequence.

God is not a vague God. He is a clear teacher, and God has been very consistent in delivering consequences for disobedience.

In Leviticus, the pattern is firmly seen where the Lord lays out his rules and statutes, and simply states, often at the end of a discourse, “I am the Lord.” The Lord demonstrated that He had the authority to create those rules. But, He did not allow them to simply be stated without following them up with a consequence for disobedience. What the Lord did, for the most part, is save the consequences for the end.

Leviticus 26:14–22

But if you do not obey Me, and do not observe all these commandments, and if you despise My statutes, or if your soul abhors My judgments, so that you do not perform all My commandments, but break My covenant,

I also will do this to you:

I will even appoint terror over you, wasting disease and fever which shall consume the eyes and cause sorrow of heart.

And you shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it.

I will set My face against you, and you shall be defeated by your enemies.

Those who hate you shall reign over you, and you shall flee when no one pursues you.

And after all this, if you do not obey Me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins.

I will break the pride of your power;

I will make your heavens like iron and your earth like bronze.

And your strength shall be spent in vain;

for your land shall not yield its produce, nor shall the trees of the land yield their fruit.

Then, if you walk contrary to Me, and are not willing to obey Me, I will bring on you seven times more plagues, according to your sins.

I will also send *wild beasts* among you, which shall rob you of your children, destroy your livestock, and make you few in number;

and your highways shall be desolate.

The commandments of God carry consequences for disobedience. Also, note how wild beasts, which Kulikovsky would contend all of mankind has dominion over, are actually used as a judgment against man for disobedience. Therefore, we see a clear, and profound shift between Adam’s dominion over the animals, to the animals becoming wild who are used sometimes as a judgment against mankind.

Was it a Command?

The Difference Between Blessings and Commandments

A major contention for my challengers is my insistence that Genesis 1:26–28 does not contain commands issued to Adam and Eve.

Kulikovsky writes:

Therefore, for Isaacs to claim that Genesis 1:26, 28 was not a command is patently absurd and goes against what the Hebrew text and the Septuagint clearly indicate. (Kulikovsky 2013, p. 139)

Another responder, McDurmon seems equally convinced as Kulikovsky. He wrote:

The imperative form is by definition the issuing of a command. What else are we to deduce from these Spirit-inspired imperatives in the scriptural record except that they are de facto commands given *lahem* (“to them”)? This should in itself end any discussion of Adam’s dominion not involving a mandate. (McDurmon 2013a, p. 147)

Both Kulikovsky and McDurmon contributed a large amount of space to arguing that the imperative form of the Hebrew, especially in Genesis 1:28, means commands were issued which Adam and Eve were then charged to obey.

Kulikovsky and McDurmon do not stray too far from each other on this particular issue, so it is fair to treat it corporately with a single response.

Are Kulikovsky and McDurmon correct? Does the use of an imperative voice automatically make it a command? I do not think so.

The Bible uses a commanding voice in another key situation that is not a command. Furthermore, this key situation is precisely in Genesis 1:28.

Blessings also can use command-like language in Scripture. And, obviously Genesis 1:28 is a list of blessings, because it began with the benediction, “Then God blessed them...” and then came the list of blessings.

The Hebrew word used for “blessed” in Genesis 1:28 is the word בָּרַךְ. בָּרַךְ is a verb; it is an action. Therefore, the party who is blessing is engaging and putting forth the effort. In Genesis 1:28, God is actively engaging Himself. Then, after the benediction, God explains the actions that are a result of His blessing. Namely, Adam and Eve will be fruitful and multiply. They will have dominion, over the birds, the fish, and the land animals, and they shall eat of all the plants bearing seeds in their fruit. These are action items that are the result of the blessing.

The important detail that my challengers (and some reviewers) have failed to detect is that commands and blessings are products of two very different paradigms, even though they both often use a commanding voice that comes from the issuer to the receiver.

Commands are issued so that the recipient is charged with fulfilling the command. Blessings are not so.

Blessings (and curses) are prophetic. Blessings are in the category of prophecy because they are telling the recipient what will happen to them in the future, and/or what they will do in the future. I will demonstrate this. Genesis 49 is the chapter devoted to the blessing of the sons of Jacob.

Genesis 49:1 states:

And Jacob called his sons and said, “Gather together, that *I may tell you what shall befall you in the last days*:... (emphasis added)

This description of all the blessings concludes with Genesis 49:28:

All these are the twelve tribes of Israel, and this is what their father spoke to them. And he blessed them; he blessed each one according to his own blessing.

It is beyond dispute that Genesis 49:1–28 are a list of blessings and curses, not commands. Yet, all different kinds of verbs are used that denote a future action from the recipient throughout the passage. In verse 19, it states “Gad, a troop shall tramp upon him, but he shall triumph at last.”

In the Hebrew text, action is levied toward the Raiders and Gad, but we do not consider that to be a command to the Raiders to raid, and we do not expect Gad to be under a command to raid back, even though one could ascribe this as a command, if it were not part of a blessing discourse.

Then Jacob changes from blessings to commands, and note the Bible is careful to record the change.

Genesis 49:29

Then he charged them and said to them: “I am to be gathered to my people; bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite,...

In the historic, and monumental event of Jacob blessing his sons, who were the patriarchs of the tribes of Israel, we see the nature of blessings. Blessings are almost always given with a commanding voice, and the one who receives the blessing is not charged with bringing that blessing to pass. We know this, because in these blessings, there are also curses relayed in a similar fashion. And obviously, a person is not responsible to make sure He lives out the curse.

In the Old Testament, the blessing of the father to the son was an important event. Its precedence and importance was established in Genesis 1:28, with the first blessing from father to children. Then the understanding of blessings continues to unfold throughout Genesis.

Jacob explained to his sons that through his blessings that he was about to give, that their lives were going to unfold in accordance with those blessings. Therefore, blessings are prophetic, and because they are prophetic the recipient is not charged with their fulfillment, rather the issuer is charged with their fulfillment. This is explained clearly in Deuteronomy 18:22.

when a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him.

The biblical blessings and curses, because they are prophetic in nature are a reflection on the issuers authority. If the blessings or curses do not come to pass, then like the prophet, the one issuing the blessing has spoken presumptuously and they had no authority to begin with.

Therefore, blessings are an action and an indication of the supernatural, whereas commands must be fulfilled through obedience in the natural. These are two very different items. Both often have to do with the actions of the recipient in the future. But, whereas a command is issued to a recipient, and the recipient is bound to fulfill it, if the blessing or curse goes unfulfilled, the blame for that is laid at the one who issued it because the individual acted presumptuously and had no authority to prophecy in that manner.

However, sometimes there was a precondition that explained what could nullify the blessing. These preconditions were commands, because the recipient was then charged with keeping it so that the blessings would not be interrupted.

Deuteronomy 30:16

...in that I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments, that you may live and multiply; and the LORD your God will bless you in the land which you go to possess.

Note that in this case, multiplying was a blessing due to obeying commandments. It was not a commandment in and of itself.

Deuteronomy 28:1–7

Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the LORD your God will set you high above all nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of the LORD your God: Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the country. *Blessed shall be the fruit of your body, the produce of your ground and the increase of your herds, the increase of your cattle and the offspring of your flocks. Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl. Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out. The LORD will cause your enemies who rise against you to be defeated before your face; they shall come out against you one way and flee before you seven ways.* (emphasis added)

The pattern that God has established in Scripture is that blessing comes with obedience. Obedience is in the natural, and blessing is of the supernatural. Commandments and blessings are two different items. A commandment is given in the natural to obey a standard that was attainable in the natural.

Whereas, a blessing is a prophetic word over what will come to pass in a person's life. This blessing is often, but not always, associated with the action of the recipient. Blessings are often spoken like commands, but they are not commands. (See Genesis 49:1–27 and 1 Samuel 26:25 as a handful of examples).

As we learned in a passage about Ishmael, God blessed him and made him fruitful and multiplied him.

Genesis 17:20

And as for Ishmael, I have heard you. Behold, *I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall beget twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation.* (emphasis added)

Notice how closely this passage resembles the passage in Genesis 1:28. There is a blessing, and that blessing is God making Ishmael great in his offspring.

Obviously, for Ishmael to be fruitful and multiply it does require a sexual action from him. But the Lord is clear, that this is going to happen as a result of a blessing and an action of God. This was not a commandment requiring obedience from Ishmael to be sexually active.

Is the language about Ishmael an identical match to the language in Genesis 1:28? No, it is not a carbon copy. But, the reasonable person can discern the context and intent of both passages as being very similar to each other, even on the Hebraic level. To try to exploit a difference will lead to a microanalysis that will injure the whole. More than likely, any reason to exploit any difference would be powered by eisegesis.

The pattern in Scripture is that blessings are often spoken over an individual with a commanding voice, via verbs, that speak of action on the part of the recipient in the future. However, because curses are also given in this manner, and both are a subset of prophecy, we know that the recipient is not responsible for fulfilling their own blessing, unless they are also under a command of obedience to statutes/laws (see Deuteronomy 30:16–17) where disobedience to those commandments nullifies the blessings that would have come with obedience to those commandments.

Taking this into consideration, let us take another look at Genesis 1:28–29.

Then God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” And God said, “See, I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food.”

My challengers want to think of being fruitful and multiplying, and having dominion on the earth being commands that were never revoked. However, in light of our discussion about blessings and commandments, and blessings being revoked due to not following commandments, we need to look at this passage one more time. I'll be working from the bottom up.

And God said, “See, I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food.”

In the original blessing, every plant yielding seed was for food. However, today, we know that some plants are poisonous.¹ Part of the original blessing, was that every plant yielding seed could be eaten. However, not every plant yielding seed can be eaten today for food.

Therefore, part of the blessing discourse has been revoked. Therefore, we know this benediction was conditional on something.

“...have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

However, it is established that nature and animals kill people. So our dominion is not seeable or even achievable as an action.

¹<http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/earthkind/landscape/poisonous-plants-resources/common-poisonous-plants-and-plant-parts/>

“Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth...”

Again we see an imperative. However, if this was in fact a command that is carried through to all mankind, then why does God repeat this to Noah, and use a benediction yet again?

Genesis 9:1

So God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them: “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.”

There was no reason to repeat this blessing if it was an authoritative command from the beginning to all mankind. So how could all of this language be revoked if they were commands to Adam and Eve?

The only way possible is if Genesis 1:28 does not represent a command by its verb tense, but through that voice it represents a blessing of future prosperity. This blessing involved the action of reaping, the action of ruling, and the sexual activity leading to reproduction by Adam and Eve, which are all the blessings in action. The partaking in the action itself is part of the blessing promised by God.

But does God call these items commands, or blessings?

Genesis 1:28

Then God blessed them,...

Taking the blessing approach, as opposed to the command approach, appears to be the safest conclusion.

The Lord blessed Adam and Eve. This was a supernatural prophetic word spoken with authority over Adam and Eve on what their life would be like. He used a command-like language, which is similar to other blessings in other passages of Scripture, to speak with authority over them.

Adam would be fruitful and multiply, they would exhibit dominion, they would eat of all the plants on the earth. This was the prophetic blessing spoken over Adam and Eve and it spoke of future actions that Adam and Eve would partake in, just like other discourses about blessings in the Scriptures.

However, as is the pattern with God, commands in the natural were to be obeyed to receive the blessings in the supernatural. What was the command tied to these blessings?

Genesis 2:16–17

And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

How do we know the blessings of Genesis 1:28–29 were lost because of disobedience to this passage? A couple of reasons:

1. Because the Lord felt the need to issue one of the

same blessings again to Noah (Genesis 9:1). Also, the vast majority of the offspring of Adam did not have a good end. It actually became cursed through the Sons of God in Genesis 6, which helped lead to the destruction of life via the Flood. Only the family of Noah survived the original crop of humanity. That is hardly a blessed outcome.

2. Not all plants can be eaten. Yet the Bible never expressively says this, but we know it to be true. This means things can be lost, with a testimony through nature (poisonous plants), without the Bible needing to explain something was lost. The Lord gives us evidence through the things that can be seen, and then gives us the faculties of biblical reasoning to understand why.

3. Animals and nature do not obey man. The Bible does state that animals will not obey man, due to the issuance of fear into the animal kingdom in Genesis 9:2 and nature confirms this.

Therefore, every element of the blessing of Genesis 1:28–29 failed to remain intact. And there cannot be a dominion mandate, which states man was commanded to have dominion in Genesis 1:28, due to the imperative language, because the Bible claims that passage as a blessing, and it follows a similar literary style as other blessings in the Bible.

Therefore, there is not, from what I can see, an irrefutable reason to demand that Genesis 1:28 contains commands, let alone a dominion mandate. What we witness is the majority of evidence suggests the blessing of Genesis 1:28 was lost due to the disobedience of the command in Genesis 2:16–17.

Multiple Dominions

Here are some other auxiliary arguments that Kulikovskiy and others have brought up. We do suffer some redundancy from here on out, but for the sake of being thorough and trying to ease all concerns I have labored to respond individually to many points.

It has been implied by my challengers that multiple dominions, both Adam’s, and then Yeshua’s are operating together. However, this dual kingdom concept, or a dominion within a dominion concept is a contradiction to biblical thought.

No one can serve two masters (Matthew 6:24), a kingdom divided cannot stand, and a house divided cannot stand (Matthew 12:25).

Also, the concept of combining Adam’s dominion with the Messiah’s dominion completely ignores another biblical reality. We must understand the dominion of sin that fallen man is under. If fallen man is under the bondage of sin, and must be delivered from this dominion of darkness (Colossians 1:13), then obviously, man is subjected to another dominion in which man is not controlling (see Isaacs 2013 for a detailed treatment of this).

This dominion of darkness nullifies any claim that fallen man has a ruling dominion in this world. Furthermore, if fallen man is not the god of this world (2 Corinthians 4:4 states he is not, and implies Satan is, and Satan is the one whom influenced Adam and Eve—Genesis 3:4), then what dominion does fallen man possibly have? For if fallen man is not the ruler of this world, then this means fallen man has lost the original Adamic dominion which was specifically to rule this world.

Yet, when one is born again, the newly redeemed individual is transferred into the kingdom of the Messiah, which is His dominion. So, nowhere in the biblical text do we see an entry point for the Adamic dominion to be brought back.

Also, Kulikovsky never actually answered my challenge of what the consequence to Adam and Eve would have been if indeed Genesis 1:28 was a list of commands, and if they failed to obey them. Would that have brought sin into the world?

Was there a Command to be Fruitful and Multiply?

In his defense of fallen man having dominion, Kulikovsky argues, as I have already mentioned, that Adam and Eve were given a command to procreate by God in the beginning.

A good litmus test to use in determining if we understand the original intent of the “reproduction” discourse is to consider the patriarchs and matriarchs responses to some situations. Did they see reproduction as a command, or a blessing?

Genesis 16:2

So Sarai said to Abram, “See now, the LORD has restrained me from bearing children...”

Sarah did not see it a sin that she did not reproduce, but rather she believed God did not bless her due to her barren womb. Sarah understood that childbearing was a result of God’s will. Her reaction to her barrenness is consistent with learning in Genesis 1:28 that reproduction was indeed a blessing to Adam and Eve.

Abraham did not reproduce with Sarah until the son of the promise, who was Isaac. The Lord determines, therefore, the blessing of children or the condition of being barren. Being barren is not a rebellion against a command. Many God-fearing women have been prevented, in one way or another, from having children. It is an outcry to even think that they are in disobedience.

Genesis 17:15–16

Then God said to Abraham, “As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. And *I will bless her* and also give you

a son by her; then *I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations*; kings of peoples shall be from her.” (emphasis added)

Reproduction is a blessing and children are a precious gift from God. This is what God says. We must understand that Sarah did not view herself as sinful because she had not reproduced, but rather she viewed herself as one not blessed. Then, the Lord decided to bless Sarah. Thereby, demonstrating to all future generations that the Lord, God, Himself, was the author of life and determiner of who is blessed with a child. For, we cannot be commanded to create life when we are not the authors of life. We cannot be commanded to reproduce when the womb is controlled by God.

This pattern of reproduction being a blessing, wholly conditional on God’s will, is repeated again in the account of Jacob and Rachel.

Genesis 30:1–2

Now when Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister, and said to Jacob, “Give me children, or else I die!” And Jacob’s anger was aroused against Rachel, and he said, “*Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?*” (emphasis added)

Jacob understood that childbearing was a blessing by God, and no amount of will or effort could produce a child, if the Lord had not ordained it.

Genesis 30:22

Then God remembered Rachel, and God listened to her and opened her womb.

The Lord opened the womb of Rachel. The fruitfulness of the womb is purely in God’s hands. This is a clear argument against Kulikovsky’s command to reproduce. The matriarchs and patriarchs understood this.

The Definition of Dominion

Kulikovsky had some comments on my use of dominion. He wrote:

According to the *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* (Soanes and Stevenson 2004), the word “dominion” refers to (1) sovereignty or control, and (2) the territory of a sovereign or government. (Kulikovsky 2013, p. 140)

After the definition Kulikovsky provided, he went on to say about the nature of dominion.

There is no indication that total control or absolute sovereignty is implied. (Kulikovsky 2013, p. 140)

But, what is the difference between sovereignty and “absolute” sovereignty, or control and “total” control?

Sovereignty actually means “supreme power and authority” (according to the *New Oxford American Dictionary*). So “absolute sovereignty” is a redundant

phrase, as is “total control.” Even though many of us will use those phrases for emphasis, if we try to argue a distinction between “absolute sovereignty” and “sovereignty,” it would be like arguing that “burning fire,” is different than “fire.”

Therefore, the point that Kulikovsky is trying to make, which is that I am implying a broader meaning to dominion than linguistically is allowed, is quite wrong. I am using the precise meaning of dominion, and his source confirms of my position.

Kulikovsky argued that:

A monarch or executive government may control and have sovereignty over a territory and its inhabitants, but that does not mean or imply that they control everything that occurs there; that there is no crime and the territory is immune from natural disasters. This misunderstanding of the meaning of dominion is a fatal flaw in Isaacs’s position. (Kulikovsky 2013, p. 140)

This argument from Kulikovsky is not close to being applicable to our discussion. No dominion of a government today is similar to the dominion given to Adam and Eve. Therefore, any comparison fails. He is guilty of equivocation.

Adam and Eve had dominion over nature in a perfect world. Governments today are humans trying to enforce rule upon humans.

Does Mankind Exhibit Dominion over Nature Today?

It is important to note that while Kulikovsky states man is trying to rule man, which was not the original dominion, he admits nature causes disasters for man. Yet, nature was precisely the subject of the original dominion of Adam. But then, Kulikovsky argued that we do exhibit dominion over nature in a peculiar way.

If we create vaccines that effectively eradicate certain diseases (for example, polio and smallpox) then we have not merely attempted or tried to subdue those diseases—we have succeeded. (Kulikovsky 2013, p. 140)

I stand by my explanation in the original paper that needing to inject our bodies with vaccines is the result of a lack of dominion, not a glorious demonstration of it. Furthermore, we have vaccinated against polio and thought we had victory over it, but we do not. Kulikovsky points to polio as a success of our dominion, as did one of my reviewers, which is why it was cited in my original paper. But, the fact is, polio broke out again. It seems like polio doesn’t agree with us having dominion over it.

Kulikovsky wrote: “The Fall simply made dominion more difficult: . . .” (Kulikovsky 2013, p. 140)

But, nowhere in the Bible does it say that the Fall made dominion more difficult.

However, the Bible does say that fallen man is under

the dominion of darkness, and that all authority on heaven and earth has been given to Messiah. Those two items, plus the naturalistic evidence which is overwhelming that neither nature, nor animals obey a rule or an authority of man, demands the verdict that the dominion of Adam was lost.

Two houses cannot be built on the exact same foundation at the exact same time. Between the dominion of sin, and the dominion of the Messiah, there is zero room for the dominion of Adam to be in existence.

However, a person may challenge me and state that Adam’s dominion never went away but was fulfilled by Messiah. But, there is a unique problem with that position, beyond the fact that the Bible explains fallen man is under the dominion of sin (Isaacs 2013).

If Genesis 1:26–28 is now supposed to be understood as the Messiah fulfilling those particular “commands” then we would be looking for the physical offspring of Yeshua. Because, it is being argued by my challengers that being fruitful and multiplying was a command given to Adam and Eve as well, right along with dominion. But, according to Scripture, Jesus never had any natural children. So, how could He have fulfilled that “command?”

If someone is going to insist that it was the job of Messiah to fulfill Adam’s so called “command” of dominion, then we have to also apply to him Adam’s “command” to bear physical children.

Obviously, the theologian would then try to argue that Jesus had spiritual children. Therefore, in response to the spiritual children claim, all I have to do is ask if that was the intention of Genesis 1:26–28 to Adam and Eve? Was the blessing referring to spiritual children, or was the blessing to them referring to them having physical children?

Furthermore, the Scriptures are forward looking Scripture. There is not a pattern of going backward. The pattern is going to the new heavens and new earth, which is enabled by a new covenant, which is all built on the dominion of Messiah, not a dominion of Adam. None of those realities seem to suggest the Adamic dominion is being restored.

Kulikovsky wrote:

The depictions of the behemoth and the leviathan in Job 40–41 are cited by Isaacs to demonstrate that mankind had no rule over these creatures, which, according to him, is what dominion would imply. (Kulikovsky 2013, p. 140)

Rule and authority is what dominion means.

Kulikovsky argued:

However, he [Isaacs] does not seem to understand that God’s interrogation of Job is directed at Job, not the entire human race. Job (or any other particular individual) may not personally be capable of capturing and taming these creatures but that does not mean

mankind collectively could not capture and/or kill them. (Kulikovsky 2013, p. 140)

If the book of Job was not directed for the reader, than why was it included in Scripture? Obviously, the interaction was recorded so that the human race could learn from it. It certainly was not written for Job's benefit, for he lived through the encounter, so he had no need to read about it.

Kulikovsky offers another unique perspective in this statement. He believes that perhaps all of mankind, when working together, could "capture and/or kill" the behemoth and leviathan.

But, is capturing and killing his standard for dominion?

It appears this is the argument he is presenting. But, if this is the case, then animals have exhibited dominion over mankind when they capture and kill us.

He also argues that taming is dominion. However, not every single creature on earth can be tamed, which he acknowledges about donkeys and I'll address later (see Isaacs 2013 for more discussion on that and an explanation to James 3:7).

Kulikovsky went on to state Genesis 9:2–3 as some sort of dominion over creatures. However, this is not rule or authority that was given to Noah. Rather, it was the new relationship of predator and prey. We also see in that same discourse that animals now feared man (which I addressed in the original paper [Isaacs 2013]). Therefore, through this fear, we see either fight or flight from the animal kind. And fight or flight is not a sign of man ruling over creatures; rather it is a sign of the opposite. For animals now have a natural instinct to rebel against man and rebellion is evidence that no dominion is recognized or enforceable.

Does Dominion Really Mean Resistance?

Kulikovsky stated:

As I have stated, human dominion implies we actively resist the effects of the Fall, but there were obviously no effects to resist when the Fall had not yet occurred. (Kulikovsky 2013, p. 141)

His second statement is correct and it nullifies his first statement. If there were no effects to resist before the Fall, then how could Adam's dominion, which was given before the Fall, have the naturally existing implication to resist the effects of the Fall?

Furthermore, Kulikovsky needs to explain, in detail, on how dominion, which means rule and authority, actually means resistance instead. For Kulikovsky said our dominion means resistance. But, resistance is usually applied to those who resist the authority, but dominion is applied to those with the authority.

Kulikovsky argued:

Isaacs also criticizes the linguistic analysis of the Hebrew words *kabaš* and *rādâ* that I presented in my paper, and accuses me of proof-texting and selectively citing authorities. But Isaacs' cavalier dismissal of the linguistic authorities is simply hubris. These linguistic resources were prepared by leading scholars based on extensive philological and etymological study of the extant texts and inscriptions. (Kulikovsky 2013, p. 141)

I was not cavalier in any of my dismissals. I dismissed his references due to what I perceived as failing content.

He wrote:

In addition, Isaacs suggests that I believe "the Creation was hardwired, from the beginning, to resist the dominion of Adam" and falsely states that I concluded that "the 'very good' Creation must have been obstinate and uncooperative from the beginning" (Isaacs, 2013, p.11). This is not only false, it is another gross mischaracterization of my argument. (Kulikovsky 2013, p. 141)

However, Kulikovsky fails to see that I have actually encouraged readers to read his original article. An author only does this when no mischaracterization is intended. Kulikovsky's outrage is misplaced.

The Messiah, Son of Man

This next point is key. Kulikovsky has argued that the Son of Man referred to in Psalm 8:4–6 should not be considered to be about the Messiah.

He needs to make this point because if he can make Psalm 8:4–6, not about the Messiah, then he can claim that dominion belongs to all of man, and that is his goal.

Kulikovsky wrote:

According to Isaacs, this Psalm "is not about mankind; it is referring to the coming Jewish Messiah" because Paul cited Psalm 8:6 in 1 Corinthians 15:27 (Isaacs, 2013, p. 10).

With all due respect to Isaacs, it is he who has misunderstood the text and used a proof text (that is Psalm 8:6)! Psalm 8 is a hymn by David. In its original historical and literary context, it served as a song of praise to our Creator God. (Kulikovsky 2013, p. 141)

Kulikovsky wrote:

It should also be noted that the term "son of man" in Psalm 8:4 is not an allusion to the term "Son of Man" which Jesus used to describe Himself in the gospels. (Kulikovsky 2013, p. 141)

Kulikovsky's claim that the son of man spoken of in Psalm 8:4–6 is not referring to the Messiah presents a big obstacle for him to overcome. This is a big obstacle precisely because the Bible states that the son of man, in Psalm 8:4–6 is the Messiah.

1 Corinthians 15:27–28 makes it clear that the

reference in Psalms 8:4–6 was speaking about the Messiah. And then again, the exact same Scripture verse was referenced in the book of Hebrews as being about the Messiah.

Hebrews 2:5–9 leaves absolutely no room for any other conclusion about the son of man in Psalms 8:4–6. The author of Hebrews quotes Psalm 8:4–6 and then explains it.

Hebrews 2:6–9

But one testified in a certain place, saying:
 “What is man that You are mindful of him,
 Or the son of man that You take care of him?
 You have made him a little lower than the angels;
 You have crowned him with glory and honor,
 And set him over the works of Your hands.
 You have put all things in subjection under his feet.”
 For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we do not yet see all things put under him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone.

The text is clear. The Son of Man, in Psalm 8:4, is the same Son of Man who would taste death for everyone, and is the same Son of Man in whom all dominion has been given to, namely Jesus.

I have presented two New Testament references to the same passage in Psalms, and both New Testament references tie Psalm 8:4–6 to the Messiah.

In Kulikovskiy’s response, one can see that he starts to rely on theologians who are arguing that Paul “interprets” the Psalms to mean Messiah, and that the Christological application of Psalms 8:4–6 is a “new meaning” that the early church applied to it.

Kulikovsky wrote:

What, then, do we make of the New Testament quotations of Psalm 8:6? This verse is cited three times in the New Testament and each instance applies it in a different way, although all have Christological significance. As Peter C. Craigie explains:

“In the early church, the words of the psalm describing mankind’s role of dominion in the world (8:6–7) are given christological significance with respect to the dominion of Jesus Christ in his resurrection and exaltation. In one sense, this is quite a new meaning, not evidently implicit in the psalm in its original meaning and context.” (Craigie 1983, p. 108)

In other words, the Apostle Paul has used a single verse from one of David’s songs of praise to illustrate Christ’s authority, power, and exalted position in God’s kingdom. (Kulikovsky 2013, p. 141)

And Kulikovskiy cited this source:

“Paul interprets this Psalm as applying to the Messiah as the one who brings to fulfillment God’s

intentions for humanity” (Beale and Carson, 2007, p. 745). (Kulikovsky 2013, p. 142)

Here is the problem with Kulikovskiy et al.’s approach to Scripture.

The same Holy Spirit that divinely inspired the Psalms divinely inspired the New Testament authors. Therefore, the meaning of the text never changed, but rather it is only amplified and better understood with further revelation.

Furthermore, Paul did not interpret the Psalms, for the Holy Spirit was doing the writing through the vessel of Paul. The Holy Spirit would not re-interpret Himself, but rather would further amplify what He inspired the Psalmist to write generations earlier.

The meaning of the Bible never changes, because God is never changing. The meaning of Psalms 8:4–6 has never changed. The author of Hebrews clearly explained what it meant. But, Kulikovskiy refuses to yield to biblical authority and argues that:

Again, these quotations of Psalm 8:6 have been given new meaning and application in the light of the new covenant—a meaning and application quite different from its original. Note that only the New Testament quotations of Psalm 8:6 have been given a new meaning and application. These quotations do not change the meaning of Psalm 8:6 in its original historical and literary context as Isaacs seems to imply. (Kulikovsky 2013, p. 142)

Kulikovsky’s argumentation only stands if the Bible is the work of man and Christianity is an evolving religion. But, Kulikovskiy’s argumentation fails if the same God inspired both the Old and the New Testaments and that the Messiah of the New Testament is the fulfillment of the promises of the Old.

Kulikovsky wrote:

It is surprising that Isaacs views the proposition of reversing the effects of the Fall as unbiblical when it is clearly implied right at the beginning just after the Fall occurred. God said to Adam:
 “[C]ursed is the ground thanks to you;
 in painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life.

It will produce thorns and thistles for you,
 but you will eat the grain of the field.

By the sweat of your brow you will eat food
 until you return to the ground,
 for out of it you were taken;

for you are dust, and to dust you will return.”
 Genesis 3:17b–19 (New English Translation)

The cursed ground naturally produces thorns and thistles, yet Adam is to work the soil in order to produce the “plants of the field” that will be his food. (Kulikovsky 2013, p. 142)

Genesis 3:17–19 has nothing to do with reversing the effects of the Fall. I still maintain that we are

not capable of reversing the effects of the Fall. Only through the shed blood of Messiah are we redeemed from the Fall. It is not in our power to reverse the Fall. If we were capable of reversing the effects of the Fall, then the Messiah would not have had to die on a cross for our sins.

Kulikovsky wrote:

Psalm 115:16 states that the earth has been given to mankind and therefore mankind has ultimate control (though not absolute control). Isaacs asserts that mankind's possession of the earth was negated by the Fall but he offers no biblical evidence to support his assertion. (Kulikovsky 2013, p. 142)

My entire argument is based on the Bible that is then corroborated by nature. This is the pattern established by young-earth creationists, and my original paper is evidence of that approach.

But speaking of zero biblical evidence, where in the Bible does it say man now has "ultimate control" but not "absolute control?" This kind of linguistic spin demonstrates a weakness in Kulikovsky's argument.

Furthermore, how does this "ultimate control," that Kulikovsky claims man has, get reconciled with Hebrews 2:8 which states Messiah was given control? "You have put all things in subjection under his feet."

Does Killing Mean Dominion?

Kulikovsky cites one of the few analogies that I did use, which was the unruly donkey that would not obey. Kulikovsky's response to it was enlightening.

Kulikovsky wrote:

A man may not be able to make the donkey walk, but he can train it to do so, and if it will not be trained he can destroy it and find a donkey that can be trained. (Kulikovsky 2013, p. 142)

As we are winding up the Kulikovsky challenge, we see him conclude that dominion somehow means that if a donkey does not lead, then he is free to simply kill the poor donkey, and find a new donkey.

This sounds too much like the story of Balaam, and we know Balaam was in the wrong (Numbers 22:29). Furthermore, what Kulikovsky has done is make the argument that dominion is demonstrated by killing those who do not obey us.

But again, if Kulikovsky really had dominion in his scenario, would he have needed to kill the poor donkey in the first place? No.

Furthermore, what happens when the donkey kills the man? Are we to argue that the donkeys have now exerted their right of dominion on mankind?

A small town north of San Antonio is mourning its mayor, who was kicked and trampled to death by a 500-pound donkey. Police say Hollywood Park Mayor Bill Bohlke, 65, was attacked by a stud donkey he kept on his cattle ranch. He was found dead about 50

yards from his truck, which was still running. Male donkeys "can become very aggressive, very mean, sometimes triggered by a female in heat," a police spokesman tells the *San Antonio Express-News*. "We'll probably never know what triggered it, but it was evident that this particular donkey was involved, based on the evidence at the scene and what we saw on this donkey." Bohlke, who was retired from the Air Force, was elected in May in his first run for public office. (Quinn 2012)

In this tragic event in Texas, a man encroached into the territory of a donkey whose senses were heightened due to a female donkey being in heat. The man's dominion over the donkey obviously did not exist.

Biblical creationists cannot continue to ignore both the naturalistic evidence, and the clear, succinct, and biblical explanation of man losing dominion due to sin, and then the redeemed man being placed under the dominion of Messiah.

Kulikovsky offered a final volley against my presentation of dominion. He wrote:

Mankind cannot prevent tornadoes, hurricanes, floods, earthquakes, and lightning strikes, but we can build stronger buildings to withstand strong winds and earth movements. We can build dams, dikes, levies and spillways to prevent or minimize flooding, and erect lightning rods to neutralize lightning strikes. (Kulikovsky 2013, p. 142)

Kulikovsky's final few points are actually a demonstration of man's lack of dominion because they are two line items that Adam would have had rule over before the Fall.

1. An animal that would not obey man's authority.
2. Natural disasters that pay no attention to man's will or wish.

Also note that building stronger buildings to resist wind, flooding, earthquake etc. is not a sign of our dominion. It is precisely a sign of our lack of dominion, because learning to survive in an environment is a far cry from having rule over an environment.

I am reminded of the Tower of Babel at this point.

Genesis 11:6-9

And the LORD said, "Indeed the people are one and they all have one language, and this is what they begin to do; now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them. Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech." So the Lord scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they ceased building the city. Therefore its name is called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth.

It is obvious that mankind has extraordinary

ability. But God did not allow fallen man to have any kind of unified rule or authority at Babel, or thereafter.

It makes sense why God would divide fallen man; for why would God want fallen, sinful man to have any kind of dominion on the earth? He would not. He would give it to His Son.

1 Peter 4:11

If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Revelation 1:5–6

...and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth.

To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Third Response: To Joel McDurmon

I am pleased to have the opportunity to respond to Dr. Joel McDurmon. Note that his view is similar in some regards to Andrew Kulikovskiy. Some of his key points are addressed in my response to Kulikovskiy, and therefore, I will allow that work to suffice for both.

My response to McDurmon in this essay, will therefore be concerned with the overall contradictions and inconsistencies in the ideas that McDurmon uniquely presented.

McDurmon's Contradictory Statements on Adam's Dominion

The first issue is McDurmon's self-contradictory stance on the state of Adam's dominion. It is helpful to contrast his opening remarks with his ending remarks.

He wrote in his introductory paragraph that: The dominion mandate was established by God *both* as the appointment of mankind to a position of authority in the earth and as a direct imperative actively to exercise that dominion. This *status* and *project* were both marred and rendered difficult by the dominion of sin and death after Adam's fall, *but they were not eradicated*. (emphasis added) (McDurmon 2013a, p. 145)

Note the two different items in McDurmon's statement. McDurmon is clear that Adam was given dominion as an appointment. Also, according to McDurmon, there was a command given to Adam by God, which is known as the mandate. McDurmon

shares this position with Kulikovskiy (see response to Kulikovskiy on the claim of a command).

McDurmon uniquely explained that the status of having dominion (the appointment to), was marred and rendered difficult after the Fall. However, he makes a clear statement that Adam's dominion was not eradicated. Therefore, his assertion is that mankind, due to Adam's appointment, still has dominion after the Fall, however, it is just more difficult now.

McDurmon also stated that the mandate, which he calls the project, also survived the Fall, but it became a more difficult task after Adam's sin and the coming of the dominion of sin and death.

Therefore, his opening position is clear that both the status of dominion, which was the appointment to dominion, and what he calls the project, which was the mandate attached to the dominion (from his position), stayed intact after the Fall. However, he maintains the exercise of both became more difficult.

It is important that everyone understands exactly his introductory claims, because McDurmon finished with a different conclusion.

Here is McDurmon's entire conclusion that he offered:

We have seen, then, that the dominion given to Adam was indeed an appointment to a position of authority, but it was much more than that. Scripture confirms through the use of imperative voice and other means that Adam's dominion was indeed a dominion mandate as well—a command to exercise dominion throughout the earth in every area of life.

While the exercise of this mandate was interrupted, stalled, diverted, and corrupted by the dominion of sin and death brought about by the work of Satan, it in no way was rescinded or "ceased to exist" (Isaacs 2013, p.13). It was restored in Christ, and is to be shared by those who are found in Him. (McDurmon 2013a, p. 155)

He began his paper stating that the dominion of Adam survived the Fall. But he stated in his conclusion:

While the exercise of this mandate was interrupted, stalled, diverted, and corrupted by the dominion of sin and death brought about by the work of Satan, it in no way was rescinded or "ceased to exist" (Isaacs 2013, p. 13). It was restored in Christ... (McDurmon 2013a, p. 155)

But, by McDurmon's own written testimony, the ability for Adam to exercise dominion was "interrupted."

But, if something is interrupted then that means it is suspended, adjourned, discontinued, put on hold; stopped, halted, ceased, ended, brought to an end; stopped the continuous progress of (*Oxford American Writer's Thesaurus and Dictionary*).

Yet, McDurmon argued that I am wrong for saying

that Adam's dominion ceased.

By McDurmon's own testimony, the ability for Adam to exercise dominion "stalled."

But, if something stalled, it is no longer in operation. It has stopped running, it's fizzled, flat-lined, died (*Oxford American Writer's Thesaurus and Dictionary*).

Yet, McDurmon argued that dominion in no way ceased.

By McDurmon's own testimony, the ability for Adam to exercise dominion was "diverted."

But, if something is diverted, it is no longer on the correct path. It has changed course.

By McDurmon's own testimony, the outward ability for Adam to exercise dominion was "corrupted" by sin.

But, if something is corrupted then it is no longer useable.

By McDurmon's own testimony, the sin of Adam is what brought this cataclysmic end to Adam's ability to exercise dominion.

I do not see why McDurmon disagrees with me with Adam's dominion being defunct? For he claims that I was wrong and Adam's dominion did not cease. However, in the same sentence, he used synonyms of the word "cease" to describe what happened to Adam's dominion.

Perhaps this is simply emotive language that McDurmon employed in his conclusion (every author is guilty of that to some extent, myself included). Perhaps, he was simply unaware of how much he was contradicting himself. However, I think it is deeper than this. There is evidence he is confused on his own position.

McDurmon, on his own ministry website, posted a video entitled, "Don't limit the Gospel" (McDurmon 2013b). It was available as of April 4, 2013, and I have recorded it for posterity. This video post featuring McDurmon, was available after he submitted his response to my paper, on the dominion mandate. In this video McDurmon stated:

God created man in His Image and in His likeness and He gave him dominion over the rest of the creatures. And he commanded him to subdue the earth, be fruitful multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it, and we know that Adam lost that dominion in the Fall, but it never really left the fact that that is stamped on the image of God within us. (McDurmon 2013b)

McDurmon has stated, and published on his own website "that Adam lost that dominion in the Fall". Then he claims in this article that Adam's dominion was not eradicated. But then again he states that it was stalled, diverted, interrupted, and corrupted.

I think the one thing that is clear, is that regardless of his nearly 10,000-word response to my claim that Adam's dominion was lost, he has not yet clarified the

issue in his own mind. He has multiple statements through multiple mediums that argue against each other, and the materials are all current.

Then, McDurmon makes an appeal to something being "stamped" on the Image of God within us. However, he cannot biblically justify anything that is "stamped on the Image of God." Man's theology on the Image of God has become much too speculative and undefined.

Due to McDurmon's stance on the appointment of dominion being both lost, and not lost by Adam, there is no sense in continuing my discussion with his concepts on the appointment of dominion. So, let the reader discern who is making a sound presentation of their view.

This leaves McDurmon's stance on whether a command was issued to Adam to have dominion. Was there an actual mandate/command given to Adam?

McDurmon uses the same argument as Kulikovsky that the Hebrew implies a command was delivered. I defer to my argument that I made to Kulikovsky's response about the key difference between blessings and commands and how both use a commanding tone in their delivery, but the responsible party is different.

There are some point-by-point remarks that now need a response (please note that some of McDurmon's arguments are addressed in my response to Kulikovsky).

Was Sin Possible for Adam and Eve Before Eating of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil?

McDurmon wrote:

To Isaacs, the fact that Adam was given a dominion mandate, and that this mandate was in fact a command to exercise dominion throughout nature—a task to be fulfilled, so to speak—carries with it a troubling implication. (McDurmon 2013a, p. 149)

McDurmon then quotes me directly:

He [Isaacs] states his objection:

With an order or command comes an implied obedience to the one to whom it was given. Therefore, the idea of an order being inserted into that particular passage places an extra burden of obedience on Adam before the Fall beyond just not eating of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Therefore, this additional command leads to the question that if Adam failed to subdue the earth, before the Fall, would that have been a sin? If so, what would the consequence be? Would Adam have been banished from of the Garden? Would that have brought condemnation to all mankind? (Isaacs 2013, p.2) (McDurmon 2013a, p. 149)

McDurmon, after quoting me, offers his commentary, and more quotes from me.

In order to escape this supposed difficulty, Isaacs

adds, “It is imperative to understand that there were no other moral obligations that Adam had other than to refrain from eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. (Isaacs 2013, p. 2).

Were this true, it would mean that nothing Adam could possibly have done apart from eating the forbidden fruit would have constituted a sin. Isaacs suggests this by asserting, “For without eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, there would not have been any sin or moral failures” (Isaacs 2013, p. 2). Is this really the case? (McDurmon 2013a, p. 149)

Yes, this really was the case. Without eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, there would not have been any sin or moral failures. And I will elaborate on that in a moment. McDurmon went on to say:

But surely God’s moral law existed in its fullness in Adam’s heart from the beginning, even if it had not been revealed propositionally to his knowledge. (McDurmon 2013a, p. 149)

“But surely” is not a reason. What is interesting is that Kulikovskiy attempted to make the same point as McDurmon here. The concept that they are both promoting is that there was a “law of God” that existed in the pre-Fall format that was broader than the one command of not eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

The biggest hurdle for them to overcome is that the Bible gives no such indication of that, and the Bible flatly refutes their assertion of such a broad undefined law. The Bible is clear that there was no sin before Adam and Eve ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And if there was no sin, then there cannot be any law.

Romans 4:15

...because the law brings about wrath; for where there is no law there is no transgression.

I’ll develop this further.

McDurmon stated:

Likewise, when Isaacs asserts that “without eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, there would not have been any sin or moral failures,” he shifts from an epistemological issue to an ontological reality: the one propositional prohibition versus the very existence—“would not have been”—of sin. The forbidden fruit constituted the sole propositionally revealed prohibition for Adam. But this does not mean that sole revealed prohibition comprehended the whole of God’s moral law, all of which man embodied and “knew” ontologically via his created nature. (McDurmon 2013a, p. 149)

Yes it does. The instruction to not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil represented both the sole prohibition for Adam, as well as the entire

scope of what actions could be committed by Adam that would displease God. No other sin was possible. There was no more, or no less. To add anything else to the prohibitions would be to add to the Word of God, and we should not do that.

Going further, I will reason through McDurmon’s arguments and show why my position is the biblical position.

McDurmon wrote in response to my biblically-backed assertion that there could only be one specific action to bring sin into the world, which was eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and he said.

...we might entertain the question of whether it would have been morally acceptable before the Fall for Adam to engage in behaviors we now understand propositionally as “sin” thanks to special revelation. Would it have been acceptable for Adam to strangle Eve? To have sexual intercourse with any of the animals? To lie, to worship other gods, or any of numerous things we understand as transgressions of God’s law? (McDurmon 2013a, p. 149)

McDurmon has made an extraordinarily flawed argument in his course of reasoning. He continued.

If the only moral obligation Adam had was to abstain from the tree, period, then we must answer yes, as repulsive as such an answer may seem, and such acts would not have constituted sins. If, on the other hand, we recognize that such behaviors would have been morally unacceptable on Adam’s part, then we have simultaneously affirmed that other moral obligations existed for Adam, even if they had not been propositionally revealed to him. (McDurmon 2013a, p. 149)

Here is the problem in McDurmon’s argument. Just because behaviors are sinful, it does *not* mean that those behaviors, or moral obligations as McDurmon stated, existed or were possible moral failures for Adam before the Fall. This is why.

McDurmon questions if it was morally acceptable for Adam to strangle Eve before the Fall. He, further questions whether it was morally acceptable for Adam to engage in depraved acts such as having sex with animals, and worshiping false gods. But, none of those actions were possible for Adam before the Fall.

Therefore, I am not arguing (if this is a point of his) that Adam was free to do those things before the Fall. What I am arguing is that those things were categorically impossible before the Fall.

Mark 7:20–23; Matthew 5:28; and Matthew 15:18–19 speak to this.

Mark 7:20–23

And He said, “What comes out of a man, that defiles a man. For from within, out of the heart of men, *proceed evil thoughts*, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit,

lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man.” (emphasis added)

Matthew 5:28

But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already *committed adultery with her in his heart*. (emphasis added)

Matthew 15:18–19

But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. For out of the heart *proceed evil thoughts*, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. (emphasis added)

What Messiah explained is that sin is birthed from the heart and mind of the individual. Evil is birthed in our thoughts. Even before an adulterous act is committed, the lust that precluded that act is counted as sin. Even before murder is committed, the murderous desire, birthed within the heart and mind of the individual is counted as sin.

The outward action of the sin is always preceded by the inward sinful lust and evil thoughts of that sin. Therefore, the knowledge of evil exists before the acts of evil. Even when there is no outward act of evil, the thought of evil is enough to condemn us for the crime (Matthew 5:28).

This is why, none of the acts of sin that McDurmon presented were even possible before the Fall. Because for Adam and Eve to commit bestiality, to commit murder, to strangle each other would require them to first birth that evil intention in their hearts and minds.

But for them to be able to birth evil intention in their hearts and minds presupposes that they had knowledge of evil. However, how could Adam and Eve have knowledge of evil, before they ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil? They could not have.

McDurmon wrote:

It is hardly true, then, that there was no moral obligation on Adam other than the prohibition of the tree. (McDurmon 2013a, p. 149)

McDurmon is wrong. Without question, there were no additional moral obligations for Adam to uphold, before the Fall. The reason for this is that there was no way for him to commit those sins, without first eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He would not have had a compulsion or even an ability to engage in depravity. In the purity of the pre-Fall mind, such evil intention could not find a home.

But, after Adam and Eve ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, what happened?

Their eyes were opened to the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 3:7). It was at this point when they recognized their nakedness. The tree was a gateway

to the acts of sin. It was impossible to reach those acts of sin, which McDurmon spoke of, without going through the gateway that provided the knowledge of that sin.

Once their eyes were opened to sin, they then thought about hiding from God, and then they acted on that sin, and they hid from God. The eyes of humanity were opened to strangulation, the killing of each other, sexual perversions, and all matters of sin conceived in the heart, and then acted out in the natural.

The eyes of humanity were not opened to those sins before they ate from the tree. It was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil that provided all the knowledge of the evil that McDurmon cited. So there was only one command from God that demanded obedience, and that was not eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Now, let's repeat McDurmon's conclusion on that subject.

If the only moral obligation Adam had was to abstain from the tree, period, then we must answer yes [to it being okay for Adam to have sex with animals, etc.], as repulsive as such an answer may seem, and such acts would not have constituted sins. (McDurmon 2013a, p. 149)

But, as I have attempted to explain, Adam was incapable of committing those acts before eating of the tree that provided the knowledge of evil, because those acts of sin require the knowledge of evil.

These acts of sin are products of depraved, gross minds, steeped in sin. Sinful acts are conceived in the minds and hearts of man before the acts are committed in the natural. But, the conception of sin in the heart and mind was impossible for Adam and Eve before they ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

So McDurmon's critique of my position on this issue fails.

He wrote:

We could deduce, therefore, that God chose to use the tree as a representative test case. He was not bound only to this case, for the moral law of God reaches to every aspect of life. He certainly could have used any other aspect of life to test Adam's faithfulness. (McDurmon 2013a, p. 149)

McDurmon, to protect his view of multiple commands in the beginning, has made the tree a symbol of sin, instead of the de facto gateway to sin. That is his mistake.

The Prince of the Power of the Air

McDurmon has a section entitled "The Prince of the Power of the Air." I am not sure who he is contending against. Part of final paragraph in this section I would agree with, but his argument sounds

like he may be refuting me, which is odd. He wrote:

For the redeemed man, the key aspect of this passage is that their alliance with the prince of the power of the air is in the past tense. While fallen humanity in this world still lay enslaved to sin and lust, this is not true of the believer. (McDurmon 2013a, p. 154)

I have been very consistent with fallen man being in bondage to sin, being in bondage to the dominion of darkness. Whereas, redeemed man is rescued from that dominion and being fully empowered through the Messiah for the cause of Messiah's dominion. Of course, McDurmon wants to reclaim a dominion mandate, but rather I would argue that through the dominion of Messiah, we are empowered for the Great Commission.

McDurmon's Dismissal of the Environmental Reality

A weakness in McDurmon's argumentation is his failure to deal with man's lack of dominion in the environment.

He wrote:

Wild animals attack! Alligators still snap and bite, ticks suck blood, tigers attack their trainers, pythons are taking over the Everglades, and much more. (McDurmon 2013a, p. 155)

He goes on to press a few ideas that suggest that the dominion is still a work in action, and that he did not have the space to develop these ideas in full. But the dominion given to Adam specifically was over the animals and nature. The inconvenient reality is the dominion over animals and nature is specifically what humanity does not exhibit. This is a huge problem for the dominion mandate proponents.

The "Throne of the Enemy"

In response to McDurmon's section entitled "The throne of the enemy," I will start by citing verses from Romans 11.

Romans 11:1–2, 4–5

I say then, has God cast away His people? *Certainly not!* For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew.... "I have reserved for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal." Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace. (emphasis added)

I say this because McDurmon demonstrates a near inability to speak of Jews without attaching a heinous adjective to the Jewish people. Here are some of his comments in his paper.

"If Jesus recognized these unbelieving, blasphemous, and murderous Jews..." (McDurmon 2013a, p. 153) and "...very faithless, blaspheming,

pseudo-children of Abraham..." (McDurmon 2013a, p. 153), and "...generation of unbelieving Jews that demanded the crucifixion of Jesus..." (McDurmon 2013a, p. 153) and "...blasphemous, murderous Jews..." (McDurmon 2013a, p. 153) and "...Jewish 'enemy' of the early Christians..." (McDurmon 2013a, p. 154) and "...the alliance between Rome and faithless Jews once again" (McDurmon 2013a, p. 154) and "...false Jews of the synagogue of Satan..." (McDurmon 2013a, p. 154).

This is very anti-Semitic and at one point he even stated that the throne of Satan in Revelation 2:13 was better understood to be the Jews.

Obviously, no natural reading of the biblical text could ever come up with that reasoning.

McDurmon is simply very confused on the nature of the Bible that he reads.

Yes, the Jewish leadership partook in the crucifixion of Yeshua, but Roman hands, Roman nails, and a Roman cross played a critical part. Furthermore, praise the Lord that it happened! It was the blood of our Holy Lamb of God that atoned for our sins! It was the alliance between the Jews and Gentiles (Romans) that facilitated the path to atonement

Furthermore, not all of Israel is faithless of that "generation."

John 1:47 states:

Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!"

So McDurmon's description of "faithless Israel" and that the Jewish people are the enemy of Christians, and that synagogues automatically mean an enemy to Christianity is false. Nathanael demonstrates that first century Jews did embrace the Jewish Messiah.

John 1:48–49 states:

Nathanael said to Him, "How do You know me?"

Jesus answered and said to him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you."

Nathanael answered and said to Him, "Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!"

Our Messiah, was a recognized Rabbi, and the King of Israel. He was not a pope or pastor of a church.

The mission of the Gospel is to the Jew first, and then the Gentile (Romans 1:16). However, any non-believing Jewish person who reads McDurmon's paper will never want to hear about Jesus. Why would they? McDurmon is claiming to represent Jesus while he is using the same kind of incendiary remarks that were so prevalent during the holocaust. We ought not except this as believers in Messiah.

Yes, the Messiah did recognize the unbelieving Jews, but he also only used believing Jews to be His apostles and used a Rabbi from Tarsus to take the word to the Gentiles.

The only reason McDurmon has heard about the

saving power of the Jewish Messiah is because a whole lot of Jews wrote about Him, believed in Him, and then proclaimed Him. Every Scripture verse McDurmon quoted, as his authority, was by a Jewish author inspired by God.

The entire first crop of Messianic believers were Jews, and they never became Christians, for Christianity was a term that did not arise until Antioch (Acts 11:26), which means Jesus never used it. In the time of Messiah, Jews were not converting to any other faith system. Rather, they were being born again and being completed in their Judaism by accepting their own Jewish Messiah who was foretold by the Jewish prophets in the Jewish Old Testament, which was then fulfilled in the Jewish New Testament. It is through this lineage of Jewish prophets, Jewish teachers, Jewish Kings, and finally the Jewish Messiah, that McDurmon owes all of his knowledge about his own sin that needed to be forgiven.

Did the So-Called Mandate (Command) of Dominion Survive the Fall or Not?

The mandate is the so-called command to take dominion on the earth. Obviously, I argue that the mandate/command itself never existed. But he argues a peculiar point on the subject, therefore I use his terminology to expose the shortcomings of his arguments.

He states: "The mandate is restored and renewed in the dominion of Christ..." (McDurmon 2013a, p. 145).

McDurmon believes that the mandate was an instruction by God to Adam.

But, if something needs to be restored and renewed, then that means the original article lies unusable and corrupted. But, can a word by God ever need restoration?

There is a difference between someone not following a command and the command itself failing.

When it is stated that someone's command has failed, that is synonymous with that person, who issued the command, failing. No word of God ever needs restored or renewed, because God does not fail. More than likely, McDurmon just needs to reword his statement for clarity.

But he will need to clarify more, because he states:

The task(s) that had been given to mankind was not retracted after mankind in Adam rebelled against God. (McDurmon 2013a, p. 150)

But if the task was not retracted, then how did the command for the task need to be restored?

There is no question that McDurmon is highly trained in theology. He has a very academic approach to argumentation. However, he simply is not delivering

a consistent message in his material. It is difficult to catch all the inconsistencies because of the sheer length of his response, but a careful eye does catch them. I submit that he is inconsistent because his theological starting assumptions are incorrect.

Closing Remarks

The best understanding of dominion, from my perspective, is that Adam was given dominion as an appointment. It was a blessing and a beautiful gift. It was never a command to command, rather, it was an appointment to a commanding position that allowed Adam to subdue the earth in anyway he saw fit in the pre-Fall sinless world. The ability to subdue, the ability to eat of all the plants, the ability to have their seed multiply and fill the earth was the blessing. Likewise, the actions that Adam and Eve would engage in, in association with the blessing, were part of the blessing as well.

But, when Adam sinned, he and mankind fell into the dominion of sin. Consequently, all fallen man is under the bondage of that dominion. However, this dominion of sin and death, the dominion of Satan, is defeated by the dominion of Messiah, and man is rescued and placed in the dominion of Messiah when man is born again.

Redeemed man is not the dominion holder like Adam was; rather we operate with authority through the dominion of Messiah. We are not operating under the dominion of Adam, nor through any command issued to Adam. For, the latter does not exist, and the former was destroyed with sin.

This explanation, which is fully detailed in the original paper, has none of the shortcomings that my challengers exhibited, in my opinion. My explanation is consistent, understandable, fully backed by many Scriptures, and is tightly woven into the theme of the Gospel that all was lost in Adam, and all is gained in Messiah.

I deeply appreciate the opportunity to engage in this very important discussion. I am thankful for Answers in Genesis, and their *Answers Research Journal* for allowing this spirited debate on such a foundational issue in our biblical faith.

I would like to thank Dr. Conrad Baggot, Dr. Joseph Pipa, Dr. Andrew Snelling, Lee Anderson, Jr., and Dr. Raymond Gannon for their work and insight.

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