

Sermon - Dominion
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The Mandate and the Mountain - What is Dominion Theology?
Scriptural Focus: Genesis 1:25-28

Welcome and Intro:

Christian theology and practice shifts thru time according societal needs and pressures

1920-1940 Fundamentalism - response to enlightenment - Billy Graham

1940-1970 Neo-Evangelicalism -Bible inspired when it urges transformation - Karl Barth

1970- 2000 Charismatic movement, mystic theology, contemplative prayer

2000 - now New Apostolic Reformation - away from main line churches = Dominion Theology

I. The Unfamiliar landscape

If you were to step into many churches across this country on any given Sunday, you might feel as though you had crossed an international border into a completely different theological country.

For those of us formed in the Episcopal tradition - steeped in the Book of Common Prayer, anchored by the slow, beautiful rhythm of the liturgical year, and focused on the quiet sacramental presence of Christ in bread and wine - the world of "End -Times" theology is often an entirely different landscape.

As a teen, I asked my Lutheran pastor what happens after I die? He said I would fall into a deep "soul sleep" and on Judgement Day I would meet my Maker. It seemed simple and satisfying.

I pursued this little, until as a Freshman at Oral Roberts University, I enrolled in a class on Eschatology, (the end of things in the future) and discovered a whole new world filled with opinion, biblical dissection of the Old and New Testament, and found myself in a class room filled with exuberant, often loud, Biblical interpretation about "The End Times."

As Lutherans, Catholics and Episcopalians, we simply do not spend much time talking about secret raptures, seven-year tribulations, or decoding ancient prophecies to predict next Tuesday's headline.

But we no longer have the luxury of remaining entirely ignorant of these ideas. Over the past few decades, a radical theological shift has taken place right under our noses. Ideas that were confined to the fringes of the American religious landscape - debated in isolated Bible college and written about in niche paperbacks, such as Left Behind by Tim Lahay - These ideas have quietly migrated out the the classrooms and into the center of American political, cultural, and social life.

II. The Text: The Original Blue print of Dominion Theology

To understand the movement, we have to go back to the very beginning - back to the ancient poetry of creation. In Genesis 1:25-28, we witness the cosmic crescendo of God's creative work. God speaks light into existence, separates the waters, coaxes vegetation from the soil, and fills the sky and seas with life. God looks at the beasts of the earth, the livestock, and everything that creeps upon the ground, and pronounces it good.

Then, the narrative slows down. God pauses to fashion a unique creature:

"Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth..."

And then comes the command that has echoed down through millennia:

"Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue and have dominion ...over every living thing."

But what did "dominion" look like to the ancient Israelites? It did not mean absolute destructive tyranny. Human dominion was meant to mirror the character of the Creator. It was an assignment of stewardship, cultivation, and protective care. To have dominion over a garden means to ensure it thrives. It means plantain seeds, weeding the soil, harvesting carefully, and ensuring that life multiplies.

Notice something incredibly vital that is missing from the Genesis mandate: Adam was given dominion over the fish, the birds and the cattle. He was told to cultivate the soil. But he was never given a mandate to rule over or subjugate another human being. In the

original blueprint of creation, human dominion applies to our relationship with the earth, never to the political subjugation of our neighbors.

III. The Shift: From Cultivation to Cultural Takeover

How then did we get from a beautiful, eco-spiritual mandate of gardening and stewardship to a fierce political philosophy?

The transformation began in earnest during the 1970s through the work of a theologian named R.J. Rushdoony. He argued that Christians had completely misunderstood the Gospel by focusing too much on saving individual souls or waiting around for heaven. He believed secular laws should be systematically dismantled and replaced with the strict civil and penal codes of the Bible.

For a long time, mainstream Christians dismissed this as an extreme, fringe theology.

But over the next few decades, those ideas underwent a fascinating, charismatic evolution. In the late 1990 and early 2000s, leaders within a movement called the New Apostolic Reformation took Rushdoony's academic theories and repackaged them into a highly digestible, concrete concept known today as the Seven Mountain Mandate.

This teaching claims that human society is divided into seven distinct “mountains” of cultural influence:

1. Government
2. Education
3. Media
4. Arts and Entertainment
5. Religion
6. Family
7. Business

The core tenet of Dominion Theology is bold: it asserts that Jesus cannot, or will not, return to earth (the Second Coming) until the Church successfully marches up those seven mountains, seizes the peaks of power, and establishes a Christianized governance over the nation. The mandate shifted from tending a literal garden to invading controlling the structures of civil society.

IV. The Reality: The subtle, growing impact in America today

Now, you might be sitting in the pew thinking, “this sounds like an intense world that has nothing to do with us here in the Episcopal Church.” But the reality is that this thinking is quietly and profoundly changing the political and cultural landscape of the United States.

For nearly a century American evangelicalism was characterized by what scholars call a “Pre-Tribulation Rapture” mentality. The idea is that the world is a sinking ship, things are bound to get worse and worse and eventually Christians would be rescued out of it by God. It was escapist theology. It caused generations of believers to look at the world with a sense of fatalistic detachment.

Dominion Theology is completely flipping the script. It replaces the “Escape” mindset with a disciplined, aggressive, long-term strategy for institutional capture. It teaches many believers that their primary spiritual duty is not just to love their neighbor or preach the gospel, but to conquer the institutions of power.

We see the impact of this theology every single day not in explicit references to Genesis 1, but in the language that is flooding our public square.

It is the language that frames democratic elections not as a healthy debate between fellow citizens with differing ideas, but as an absolute, existential “cosmic war” between good and evil.

It is the language that views school board meetings, library policies, and local city councils not as places of civic cooperation, but as “battlegrounds” where demonic strongholds must be violently torn down. The key verse for this thinking is *Ephesians 6:2*

“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of the world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.”

This is the underlying ideology powering what our Episcopal House of Bishops recently identified as the urgent danger of Christian Nationalism - the belief that the United States is inherently a Christian nation and that its laws, courts and institutions must uniquely favor and enforce Christian identity.

According to surveys, it seems that while only about eleven percent of Americans explicitly identify as strict Christian Nationalists, an additional 21 percent sympathize with these views. Most strikingly, over 55 percent of one of our major political parties have invested themselves with the core tenets of this interpretation of scripture. It has moved from the class rooms of Oral Roberts University straight into the halls of Congress, the benches of our courts and the confusing rhetoric of the evening news.

V. The pastoral Critiques: Jesus temptation in the wilderness

When the House of Bishops published its recent report on this crisis, they did not mince words. They warned that this movement is not just a political problem: it is a deep theological distortion that fundamentally violates the core teachings of Jesus.¹

¹ The Episcopal Church (USA): Report on Christian Nationalism and Dominionism

The most comprehensive critique from a House of Bishops body comes from **The Episcopal Church**.

- **The Statement:** Commissioned by Presiding Bishop Michael B. Curry, the House of Bishops Theology Committee published a definitive report titled *The Crisis of Christian Nationalism*. [1, 2]
- **The Core Argument:** The report explicitly challenges **dominionism** and "church statism"—the political ideology that Christians hold a divine mandate to control secular institutions like government, education, and media. [1, 2]
- **The Verdict:** The committee of eight bishops and six theologians strongly condemned the movement, declaring that dominionist-leaning Christian nationalism is **fundamentally an apostasy** and a sin that directly violates the first and second of the Ten Commandments. [1, 2]

2. The Church of England: Rejection of Ecological Dominion Theology

In a different context, the **Church of England** addressed "dominion theology" specifically regarding how humans interact with the environment. [1]

- **The Statement:** The Faith and Order Commission, acting on behalf of the House of Bishops, published the official teaching document *Hope for All Creation: A theological response to the environmental crisis*. [1, 2]
- **The Core Argument:** The document directly targets the historical misinterpretation of Genesis 1:28. The bishops note that the verse has been twisted to justify a "**dominion theology**" that claims humanity has a right to control, conquer, and exploit the Earth. [1]
- **The Verdict:** The House of Bishops formally rejects this view, clarifying that scripture instead commands a framework of **stewardship and responsibility** to nurture and sustain God's creation. [1]

Dominion Theology tempts the Church with the exact same thing that Satan tempted Jesus with in the wilderness. Do you remember the third temptation? The tempter took Jesus up to a very high mountain - perhaps we could call it the ultimate cultural mountain - showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory, and said, *"All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me."*

Satan offered Jesus immediate, total, top-down dominion over human society. He offered Him the crown without the cross. He offered Him political supremacy to force people to behave.

And what did Jesus do? He rejected it flatly.

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus is constantly pushed by His followers to seize political power, to overthrow the Roman occupiers, and to establish a literal, visible, national kingdom. But when He stood before Pontious Pilate, facing execution, Jesus looked at the representative of the greatest empire on earth and said clearly:

"My Kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting..."

When the Church tries to conquer the "mountains" of this world using the weapons of political force, coercion, and institutional supremacy, we abandon the cross. We exchange the towel and the basin for the scepter and the sword. We trade the agonizing, beautiful work of sacrificial love for the cheap, intoxication high of political control.

VI: Conclusion: Our True Mandate

Hear me now! The original mandate of Genesis was never abolished, it was fulfilled and understood through the person of Jesus Christ.

Jesus did not show us a dominion of top-down power. He showed us a dominion of bottom-up transformation. He did not conquer Rome by climbing to the top of its imperial peak; He transformed the cosmos by dying on a garbage heap, outside the city walls. He did not call us to rule over our neighbors; He commanded us to love them.

Every time someone is baptized or confirms their faith within the context of the Episcopal Church we do not promise to conquer the culture. We do not swear allegiance to a national identity or vow to seize the levers of government. Instead we stand before God and one another, and we make a very different set of promises:

- We promise to continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers.
- We promise to resist evil, and whenever we fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord.
- We promise to seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving our neighbors as ourselves.
- We promise to strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being.

That is our true mandate. It is not an aggressive march up a mountain of power. It is a humble walk down into the valleys of human suffering, armed with nothing but grace, mercy and unconditional love. Our highest calling is not to sit on top of the world ruling over our neighbors, but to follow the One who knelt down to wash the feet of His disciples, even the one who would betray him.

Let us reject the intoxicating illusion of dominion and control. Let us return to the quiet radical work of the garden: plantain seed of peace, cultivation communities of justice and bearing the image of a loving Creator in a broken world.

Amen

PS. The magazine Atlantic Monthly, has a variety of articles on this topic.

Synopsis:

Dominionism (or Dominion Theology) is a theocratic political mindset and religious framework built on the belief that Christians are divinely mandated to occupy and control the political, cultural, and social institutions of a nation.

While it relies heavily on specific theological interpretations, it is often best categorized by political scientists and sociologists as a **political ideology and a mindset** aimed at achieving religious supremacy.

Dominionism itself is **not entirely new**, but it has evolved into a **new mindset and a modernized strategy** over the last few decades.

The Theology (Not New): The foundational ideas of Protestant Dominionism emerged in the **1970s**. It started primarily with *Christian Reconstructionism*, a strict Calvinist movement that advocated for replacing secular law with Old Testament biblical law (theonomy).

The Mindset (Modern Evolution): In recent decades, the dominionist mindset has radically shifted. It moved away from dry, legalistic theology into a highly active, **hyper-charismatic cultural campaign** known as the New Apostolic Reformation (NAR). This modern mindset is driven by the **Seven Mountains Mandate**, which instructs believers to actively conquer seven key "mountains" of culture: religion, family, education, government, media, arts/entertainment, and business.

Evidence of Alignment with Dominionist & Theocratic Views

Public evidence highlights secretary of State Pete Hegseth's deep, public support for the leaders and concepts core to this movement:

- **Affiliation with Doug Wilson:** Hegseth is a vocal supporter of Pastor [Doug Wilson](#), the co-founder and most prominent voice of the CREC network. Wilson's theology heavily emphasizes an all-powerful God with dominion over all of society, openly advocates for Christian nationalism, and supports turning America into a Christian theocracy. A Pentagon spokesperson confirmed that Hegseth "very much appreciates many of Mr. Wilson's writings and teachings". [[1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#)]
- **Pentagon Prayer Invitations:** In February 2026, Hegseth invited [Doug Wilson to lead a monthly worship service](#) at the Pentagon. Hegseth's local pastor, **Brooks Potteiger**, has also prayed at a Pentagon service hosted by Hegseth. [[1](#), [2](#), [3](#)]
- **Public Endorsements:** Hegseth shared a video regarding the CREC network on social media, aligning himself with Christ Church's primary motto, "**All of Christ for All of Life.**" Wilson noted that by doing so, Hegseth was effectively "saying, 'Amen,' at some level." See <https://apnews.com/article/pete-hegseth-crec-church-christian-nationalism-wilson-e71c3ea072fa959b5bee09a4d2093f1a>
- **Rhetoric on Education:** Hegseth has framed cultural issues in the language of a spiritual war. During an appearance on the Christ Church-connected streaming show *Crosspolitic*, Hegseth argued that building up fundamentalist Christian

education systems is crucial in a "[spiritual battle" with the secular world](#), referring to Christian schools as a "boot camp" to train student soldiers. See below.

<https://alabamareflector.com/2024/11/26/trumps-defense-secretary-nominee-has-close-ties-to-idaho-christian-nationalists/>