

Commanded to Reign

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Can you believe that you were created to reign?

What comes to mind when you hear the word "reign"?

To reign means to be given a mandate to be in charge.

When God created human beings, He gave us a mandate to be in charge.

All human beings reign over creation; it's part of what it means to be human.

But we don't all feel comfortable with the idea of reigning!

Some of you probably think that you were created naturally to be in charge; you can't help taking charge, and when you see a vacuum, you fill it.

Others of you will never accept the idea; you don't want to be in charge of picking a place to go for lunch.

But some of the discomfort some of us feel comes from our picture of reigning.

For some, the idea of reigning conjures up images of Ebenezer Scrooge.

Charles Dickens wrote *A Christmas Carol*, and he created a character in Scrooge that is difficult to forget.

As Scrooge walks down the street, no one speaks to him. Dogs scurry away.

Scrooge owns and runs a counting house. It's December, Christmas Eve, and it's cold outside.

Inside, there is a small fire in Scrooge's office, but in the counting room, Scrooge's clerk huddles over with one lump of coal burning. The coal is kept in Scrooge's office, and when the clerk comes in to get another lump of coal, Scrooge threatens to fire him. So, the clerk warms his cold hands over his lonely candle.

Here's Scrooge! We see him as the epitome of miserliness, squeezing every penny he can out of life. He's also the picture of heavy-handed rule—dominating every person and every detail in his dreary little world. It's not a pretty picture.

Is that what you think of when you think of reigning? If you have ever experienced heavy-handed leadership, that may be what you think of when you think of reigning.

But that's not what reigning means!

That's not what God does. That's not what God expects of us.

That's not what God wants for the world when He mandates that we human beings reign. No, He calls us to something higher.

And that is a thought that should cause you to pause and ask yourself, "God thinks about us?"

That thought might just blow your mind.

Like some of you, David was blown away by the fact that God even thinks about us!

In Psalm 8, he begins by praising God! O LORD, he says, You are majestic and glorious.

Stronger than any enemy! Higher than the heavens!

And yet you think of us? Why? And you have a purpose for us in creation? To reign? Really?

David is blown away. And so are we!

What does it mean that we humans reign? Let's find out.

The LORD shocks us by placing us so high!

In verses 3-5, David surprisingly tells us that God places us just below heaven in glory:

*When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,
what is man that you are mindful of him,
and the son of man that you care for him?
Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings
and crowned him with glory and honor.*

David is just blown away by the thought, so let's pause for a moment and ask why.

David is saying first that God put the moon in the sky and every single star (including our own sun) in place. Yet He still gives a thought to us. Wow!

And then David is saying that when you think about the amazing beings in heaven—angels, archangels, and all the others, then we are just a little lower than they are in glory and honor.

David is rightly shocked, but that just makes sense! It is shocking!

If you think about our sun for just a minute, how does God even think of us in that category?

The sun is the star nearest to us. It's a massive hot ball of glowing gases.

You could fit over a million earths inside the sun.

Every second, the sun gives off 650,000 times the energy as we on Earth consume in a year.

And it's just one average star in our massive galaxy of stars in a universe of galaxies.¹

God did all of that. And He still thinks of you. And me. Is that not amazing?

If you add angelic beings like we meet in Joshua chapter 5, where do we really belong?

Joshua, the leader of Israel at the time, was preparing for a battle.

Suddenly, he saw one who looked kind of like a man. But something was different about him.

The being identified himself as the commander of the Lord's army.

This was a heavenly being, a powerful angel. Joshua fell to the ground in fear.

That's what happens when heavenly beings like angels appear.

And yet, David says that God puts us just below those beings in the order of things.

¹ <https://streetscience.com.au/the-power-of-the-sun/>

That's you! That's me! No wonder David is amazed!

Then in verses 6-8, he blows our minds because God put us over all of the earth. David writes:

*You have given him dominion over the works of your hands;
you have put all things under his feet,
all sheep and oxen,
and also the beasts of the field,
the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea,
whatever passes along the paths of the seas.*

David is going right back to Genesis.

God created the fish of the sea, birds of the air, wild creatures, and livestock.

Here, David is saying about us, "You are over them all!"

God has given us dominion over all of earthly creation.

But that barely makes sense when you think about the power that exists on Earth!

Blue whales can reach 100 feet long and weigh 400,000 pounds.

Peregrine falcons can dive at over 240 miles per hour.

And there are over 7 billion people, but between 10 and 20 quadrillion ants.

And God places us over all of that. Imagine. David is shocked. When I think about it, so am I.

The LORD actually expects us to reign.

God lays out His expectations of every human being in Genesis 1:28.

This is the pinnacle moment in Genesis 1.

Having created everything else, God created humans, blessed us, and said:

... "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

Here is the mandate: have children and fill the earth; have dominion, rule over it all.

We're given the mandate, and God expects us to fulfill it, but will we exercise our mandate?

It reminds me of a poignant speech by the Queen Mother in *The Crown*.

The Crown was a streaming series depicting the monarchy in the UK.

In season two, Queen Elizabeth reached the turbulent years of the 1960s and was peppered with suggestions to become less caught in protocol and tradition.

While heading to a very modern event, the Queen Mother Elizabeth, was pulling up her white gloves as if she were putting on armor for a battle or boxing gloves for a match.

She said, "The history of the monarchy in this country is a one-way street of humiliation. ... Small wonder we make such a fuss about curtsies, protocol and precedent. It's all we have left. The last scraps of armor as we go from ruling to reigning to—"

She paused, "To being nothing at all. Marionettes."

She was dealing with reigning but not ruling, and so do we sometimes.

We're given the mandate. But will we exercise it? Will we exercise it rightly?

Three tensions describe what our role is in reigning over creation:

The first tension is: Taming yet Transforming.

Even in the Garden of Eden, we human beings had a job. We were to tend, to take care of, the garden. We were to turn that garden ultimately into a city. God gave us a wild world and wanted us to make it into something even BETTER.

Now, in the sinful world, creation fights back. We are not just taming it at times but changing it. Sometimes we have to take out that which is deadly and bring out that which gives life.

Nature is beautiful but not neutral or perfect! At times we tame, at others we transform.

The second is: Multiplying yet Maturing.

God clearly called human beings to make more human beings. That has been the only command of God's that we have never yet had a difficult time keeping. But now, it is important to remind ourselves—God wants us not only to have children, but also to pass our faith along to them, and to shape the future and the world through them.

Paul tells us in Romans that fallen creation is groaning. It knows that it is now a land of fears and tears and longs to be something more. But Paul says that creation expects us to be what we were created to be! We will only reign rightly in eternity. But along the way, we can do good or bad jobs of reigning, and sometimes the difference comes down to maturity. As we mature and reflect both wisdom and the image of Jesus, we get our job right more and more often. So, we multiply while maturing.

The third is: Ruling yet "Renting."

God commanded us to rule. He means for us to follow His example in what it means to govern. We are in charge, but even that rule is delegated.

God is the true owner. We are like renters—living in the space and using it, but we are accountable for the Earth before God.

When we reign, we get to be like Jesus.

Hebrews 2 takes Psalm 8 and traces Jesus' surprising path from becoming human to reigning.

It says that Jesus, THE Son of Man, became human like us—a little lower than the angels in a way.

Hebrews 2:9 starts:

But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels ...

Jesus did this to take on our sin and die in our place.

Now, risen from the dead, Jesus is crowned with glory and honor.

Jesus will reign over everything in heaven and earth. **Hebrews 2:8** says:

... Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. ...

This is still the age of fears and tears, and not everything recognizes Jesus' rule. **Hebrews 2:8** says:

... At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him.

That's yet to come.

The reign of the Son of Man will ultimately end the age of fears and tears.

Jesus will return one day and defeat all His enemies.

All heaven and earth will be subjected to Him.

When Jesus is in charge, death will be no more. Evil will be eradicated. Sin will be destroyed.

And all of the consequences of sin, death, and evil will be gone.

The age of fears and tears will end, and eternity will begin.

That's what the reign of the True King looks like!

Then Jesus will hand that rule to God the Father for eternity.

Jesus, THE Son of Man, is now a new template for the sons of men.

Jesus shows us what we SHOULD be like, because His life, death, and resurrection show us what reigning really looks like.

But Jesus also shows us what we WILL BE like in eternity. Adam was the template for the sons of man. We are all descended from Adam, biologically and spiritually; we are like him.

(The Bible uses "sons of man" as a catch-all title for human beings—men and women alike.)

But Jesus is the New Adam. When we become disciples of THE Son of Man, then we are being made to be like Him. We will be resurrected like Him, given new bodies like Him, and like Him.

Right now, creation is like a classroom full of energetic 2nd graders when the teacher is called away.

The teacher leaves clear instructions: spend ten minutes reading silently. Stay in your seats.

That lasts for about 30 seconds. Then one kid throws paper. Someone laughs. Someone retaliates. Pretty soon, half the class is talking loudly. Paper is flying.

Because they're bad kids? No. Because that's what kids are like without a teacher.

That's how creation groans waiting for you and me to become who we were made to be.

Creation since the Fall tends toward thistles and thorns.

Think I'm wrong? If you own a house, picture what would happen if you left it for a year and no one took care of it in your absence. The grass would die, weeds would take over, gutters would fill, appliances would break, mold would grow. That's just the start! Creation needs us!

We represent the Creator—bringing order, opening up possibility, and giving life.

When I speak of Creation, I don't just mean the natural order either. I mean every aspect of life here and now. It all groans under the weight of the Fall.

One day, when Jesus returns, He will make it all right.

Until then, Creation needs us to reign.

Let's reign over creation as God would.

To reign over creation as God would means thinking like an artist, a bit like Bob Ross.

Bob Ross was a painter who hosted a PBS show where he taught people how to paint.

I remember watching Bob Ross occasionally with my grandfather when I was growing up.

Bob used to gently create entire worlds on canvas.
He would start by creating backgrounds and borders.
Then the midgrounds would come together as though they had always been there.
And last, the foregrounds would almost leap off the canvas.
Reigning like God reigns is a bit like that.
Reigning like God reigns—wherever we are in creation—means creating and cultivating life.
It means creating the conditions where everything fits and everyone can THRIVE!

We need more Bob Rosses!

More people who cultivate life in every corner of creation, more people who create the conditions where everything fits and everyone can thrive.
We need to do that with creation itself; we are responsible for how we take care of the planet.
If you are a doctor, this may be easy to picture. You use your knowledge and tools to fight diseases, help sick people get well, and help healthy people stay healthy.
But the same thing applies to the rest of us—if you teach, practice law, or run a business; if you sell, ship, cook, or grow food; if you lead, manage, or work; if you run a home and family.
No matter what you do, do it for God's glory as HIS representative to earth.

When I think about reigning as God would, I think of Mr. Fezziwig.

Mr. Fezziwig is one of my favorite characters in all literature and quite a contrast to Scrooge.
Scrooge was apprenticed to Old Fezziwig as a young man, and he visits the past with one of the ghosts in *A Christmas Carol*.
Old Fezziwig was nothing like Scrooge had become.
On Christmas Eve, he closed the business and threw a massive celebration for everyone!
His apprentices were thriving. They were finding their ways not just toward future jobs but toward future lives (and wives).
Fezziwig was in charge, yes. But he was cultivating life and creating the conditions in which everyone could thrive. I think about Mr. Fezziwig often.
He gives us a glimpse of what it means to reign as God would.

And I think about God walking the world when it was shiny and new.

Genesis 3 tells us that the LORD did walk through creation, enjoying what He had made and spending time with Adam and Eve.
Can you imagine what creation must have been like under His watchful eyes?
Life springing from every corner.
Everything growing, thriving, becoming EXACTLY what God saw that it could and should be.
Life everywhere!

And I realize—that's who I want to be and what I want to do.

I want to be a life-giver.

I want to make it possible for everyone and everything around me to thrive.
I want to reign, just as my Heavenly Father intends.