

I'm glad you asked:  
What is Dominion Theology?

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### **Definition**

Dominion theology is a theological perspective that contends that the Church is God's instrument by which He takes "dominion" over the world. The "kingdom of God" began advancing with the ministry of John the Baptist (Mt. 11:12) and arrived in power with Jesus (Mt. 10:23; 12:28). God intends that His domination continue today, through the Church.

- God gave to Adam "dominion over the fish...over the fowl...and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth." (Genesis 1:28, KJV)
- Jesus took dominion over Satan while he was on earth, casting out demons, quieting storms and healing diseases.
- Jesus gave authority to his disciples "to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness." (Matthew 10:1; cf. Mark 16:17ff.)

### **Basic Tenets**

- God gave dominion to Adam and Eve (Genesis 1:28) but Satan stole it.
- God intends the Church to regain dominion.
- The Church is the new Israel (replacement theology).
- We are now in the "kingdom age" and the kingdom of God is among us.
- The Old Testament Law is our rule of life today. It may not be a condition for salvation but it is for sanctification.
- Jesus will return after dominion is regained.

### **History**

The view can be found in the theology of Judaism. Jews looked for a Messiah who would defeat the evil of the various world powers (Egyptian, Babylonian, Persian, Greek, & Roman) and establish his superior and dominating empire throughout the world. This was the only way peace would come to our troubled planet. The Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9) would rule the world in peace (shalom), and from the City of Peace (Jeru-salem). Evil would be dominated in every area of life.

The early days of Church history saw increasing animosity between Jews and Gentile Christians. Fewer and fewer Jews were converted and more and more Gentiles professed faith and within a few hundred years, Christianity was a thoroughly Gentile entity. Church leadership increasingly saw the Church as the "true Israel" or the "new Israel.") Today this is called "replacement theology" and is often a "backdrop" for Dominion Theology. Because of Israel's failure, God has now turned to the Church to be the instrument through which He will exercise His dominion in the world.

1. Clement describes loyal Christians as "the true Israelites". (A.D. 95f.)
2. Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, on way to his martyrdom in Rome wrote 7 letters to churches of Asia Minor. One of these letters is addressed to Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna. (A.D. 107)
  - Anti-Semitic, it rejects all connection with Judaism.

- “Monepiscopacy” (literally, “one bishop,”) is advocated as sole form of church governance. (i.e. One elder/bishop rules the church vs. a plurality of elders.
3. A.D. 135, *Gospel of Barnabas* expresses anger toward the Jews.
  4. A.D. 170, Monepiscopacy pretty well established in Rome and with it a strong sense that the church was the “new Israel.” The two notions seem attached to each other.
  5. Fourth century, the Church gains political clout and the notion of the Church taking dominion over all areas of life is fostered by leadership.
    - 313 Edict of Milan, June 15 issued by Constantine and Licinius = freedom for Christians from persecution.
    - 364 Christianity declared the sole religion of the empire – again.
    - Theological shift with Augustine and others from millennialism to amillennialism.
      - i. Millennialism: The world will continue to deteriorate until Christ returns and personally sets up his kingdom on earth and personally rules for 1000 years.
      - ii. Amillennialism: Christ is reigning on earth, for 1000 years, but He is doing so through the Church.

So the Church, politically, as well as spiritually, began to exercise its God-given dominion in the world. The groundwork was being laid for the establishment of the Holy Roman Empire.

Contemporary Dominionism includes both a charismatic and a non-charismatic strain.

- A non-charismatic strain such as “Reconstructionism” (Reformed): In the 1960 and 1970s R.J. Rushdoony, Reformed/Calvinist theologian, focused on the rule of O.T. law in all society, the sovereignty of God over human freedom and action, and a denial of the operation of charismatic gifts in the present day (cessationism). Their belief, post-millennial, is that Jesus cannot/will not return until the Church has taken dominion over all governmental and societal institutions.
- A charismatic strain such as “Kingdom Now” theology: A minority movement within the larger charismatic circle, which emphasizes the basic tenets that Satan “stole” dominion from Adam and Eve and that God intends for the church to regain this dominion over evil, dominating all of life through the charismatic power of the Holy Spirit. Both spiritual and civil power is to be seized by the Church, whenever and wherever Christians are willing to exercise their God-given authority. This group may or may not hold to a replacement theology as mentioned above.

A common practice of charismatics, that may or may not be an expression of Dominion Theology, is that of “taking power over evil/demons/etc.”

- Jesus exercised “dominion” over evil, including demons and illness. John says, “The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work.” (1John 3:8).
- Jesus also gave his disciples such authority (Matthew 10:1; cf. Matthew 18:18) and said that signs of this authority (“...they will drive out demons;

they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well.”) would accompany his followers (Mark 16:17f.). When his disciples asked why they were unable to drive a demon out of a young boy, Jesus replied, “Because you have so little faith.” (Matthew 17:19). After Pentecost the disciples certainly saw God do many miracles through them. (Acts 5:12)

- Some say that the above authority was given to Jesus’ disciples only, and not to us today. (But if this is the case, then what else might Jesus have told tell his disciples that we don’t need to pay attention to?) These folks suggest that all we are told to do is to “resist the devil and he will flee from you” (James 4:7) and they imagine that to “resist” is passive. I think not. The word James chose to use is clearly in the active voice, not passive, and means, literally, “to stand out against.” “Resisting arrest” is certainly not considered a passive behavior.
- Certainly, care must be exercised in “taking control” of any evil. The seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish high priest, learned this the hard way, when a demon apparently ignored their attempt to be cast out and overpowered them to the point that they fled from the house “naked and bleeding.” (Acts 19:16)
  - i. Remember that Jesus said, “apart from me you can do nothing.” (John 15:5)
  - ii. Use Jesus’ name (John 14:14; Acts 3:6). Remember that it is not just using Jesus’ name that counts but having a relationship with the living Christ and therefore receiving your authority from him. The infamous “Seven Sons of Sceva” (above) sought to exercise dominion by saying, “In the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out.” (Acts 19:13). It turned out rather badly for them.
  - iii. Jude, vs. 9, is instructive. “But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against him, but said, ‘The Lord rebuke you.’”
- Care must also be taken when we criticize behaviors of other believers that may not be part of our own, non-charismatic, traditions. If these behaviors have a biblical precedent we would do well to be “quick to listen and slow to speak.” Could this be an area where God desires us to grow and learn?

### **Conclusion**

I cannot agree with “Dominion Theology” for the following, primary, reasons:

- It typically fails to distinguish between Israel and the Church (Cf. Romans 9-11).
- It fails to understand that the O.T. Law was intended to lead us to Christ (Galatians 3:24) and now that Christ has come “we are no longer under the supervision of the law.” (Galatians 3:25) The O.T. law is but a “shadow of things to come.” (Colossians 2:17) (Cf. Galatians 5; Romans 7:4)
- It fails to understand that the millennial kingdom is yet to come (Rev. 20).

Finally, however, remember that there are aspects of this theology that are certainly biblical, including the realization that, in the name of Jesus, we have great spiritual authority over evil. This should be a challenge to the entire evangelical world, especially the non-charismatic, evangelical world. Don't throw the proverbial "baby out with the bathwater."

Thanks for "listening."  
Don Reigstad (December 2009)