



## What's Happening?

The Seattle Chapter's Sound Reasons meetings have been a big hit, both in terms of the subject matter and the opportunity to fellowship with local RTB supporters. This series will resume in the fall. If you have suggestions on future topics please contact Mike Brown at [apologist2@comcast.net](mailto:apologist2@comcast.net).

We are also continuing to explore the possibility of bringing Hugh Ross or another RTB scholar to the area sometime later this year. We are particularly interested in hosting forums for young adults. If you are involved with a local college and might be interested helping to organize an event, please contact us.

In the meantime, we encourage you to continue checking the RTB website for new resources ([www.reasons.org](http://www.reasons.org)). Fuz Rana has published a new book, *Creating Life in the Lab*, and there is a large collection of podcasts available for download. For those interested in training, Reasons Institute will be offering the "Creation vs. Evolution" course beginning June 6.

As always, if you have questions, or if we can support your ministry efforts in any way, please do not hesitate to contact the Seattle Chapter at [seattle@reasons.org](mailto:seattle@reasons.org).

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## What Does a "Very Good World" Look Like?

By Daniel J. Dyke and Dr. Hugh Henry

One point of contention among those who believe in creation is the issue of death and decay in the original created order. The question, simply stated, is whether or not death, decay, disease, harsh conditions, etc., exists as a part of the world before the fall of Adam.

When God proclaimed creation "very good," (*tob meod*) was the world blissful, like the popular concept of Nirvana—or did it function under harsh conditions?<sup>1</sup> Was it "perfect," with self-sustaining agriculture and lions that literally ate straw? Or was it a world full of potential, in need of taming and management? Did fruit trees need pruning and did lions "lie in wait in a thicket" to "hunt the prey"?



Many old-earth creationists (OEC) hold that death and subsequent decay did occur in the original created order, but just not for man in his closed environment called "the Garden of Eden." Young-earth creationists, on the other hand, often have a more restrictive interpretation. For example, Dr. Jonathan Sarfati writes, "A straightforward interpretation of Genesis shows that death of humans and vertebrate animals (Hebrew *nephesh chayyah*, "living creature") is the result of Adam's fall."<sup>2</sup> Is this as clear as Dr. Sarfati asserts—or does the Bible suggest another interpretation?

The answer to this question may be found in the words *kabash* and *radah* (rendered "subdue" and "rule," respectively, in most English translations) as used in Genesis 1:28. God instructs Adam to: "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and *subdue* it; and *rule* over ... every living thing" (emphasis added).

Popular interpretation of the pre-fall world as a "blissful Nirvana" has become the de facto position and, for some, a test of orthodoxy. Before the fall man is believed to have lived in a paradise in harmony with nature. Thus, God's command to "subdue" and "rule" is viewed as a nebulous, benign stewardship. Animatronic figures of children and dinosaurs playing together on

display at the Creation Museum in Kentucky illustrate this in the extreme. It seems that, according to this interpretation, man's only task was not to mess it up by eating forbidden fruit.

However, this unspoiled paradise scenario is not consistent with the meanings of *kabash* and *radah*. A Hebrew lexicon defines *kabash* as "subdue, bring into bondage;"<sup>3</sup> and it defines *radah* as "have dominion, rule, dominate."<sup>4</sup> These words imply an aggressive, forceful stewardship, and suggest that the "blissful Nirvana" interpretation is wrong. Instead, the Bible teaches that the pre-fall world required humanity to tame and manage it. Land needed cultivation, fruit trees required pruning, and lions probably laid in wait to hunt prey.

In order to paint a good picture of conditions in the pre-fall world, it is necessary to review the uses of *kabash* and *radah* elsewhere in the Old Testament. Eleven other uses of *kabash* all refer to violent action against strong resistance. Specifically *kabash* is used in regards to:

1. Military conquest against a strong enemy: (a) The Israelites conquering Canaan;<sup>5</sup> (b) King David conquering neighboring peoples.<sup>6</sup>
2. God freeing his people by throwing off the yoke of their captors with the coming of the Messiah.<sup>7</sup>
3. Enslavement: (a) Israelites capturing and enslaving residents of Judah;<sup>8</sup> (b) Jews selling themselves into slavery;<sup>9</sup> (c) Forced enslavement of Jews by their Jewish brothers.<sup>10</sup>
4. Haman charged with intent to assault Queen Esther.<sup>11</sup>
5. God destroys the sins of those who repent.<sup>12</sup>

Old Testament uses of *radah* beyond Genesis 1 always imply total control and/or conquest—even total destruction—in the face of violent resistance (or the potential for violent resistance). *Radah* occurs five times in Mosaic literature after Genesis 1, in regards to:

1. Management of slaves. Leviticus 25:43, 46, and 53 seem especially revealing. Verses 44-46 give Israelites carte blanche with regard to slaves who are "aliens among you," but verses 43, 46, and 53 repeat specific instructions not to "rule" (*radah*) Israelite slaves "with severity" or "ruthlessly." Use of a qualifier to decrease severity suggests *radah* might have an element of brutality.
2. Rule of the Israelites by cruel enemies if they reject God's laws and commands.<sup>13</sup>
3. Conquest and destruction of evil opponents by the Messiah and/or David.<sup>14</sup>

The usage of *radah* is similar in 14 instances throughout non-Mosaic literature:

1. Solomon's absolute control of the territories and "kings" within his empire.<sup>15</sup>
2. Control of taskmasters over the conscripted workers in Solomon's building projects (including the temple).<sup>16</sup> The work was not carried out joyously, but under great severity; if the dialog in 1 Kings 12 between the people and King

## Bible & Science In the News

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### ■ A Failed Comeback

In this first of a two part article, Fuz Rana discusses how the Miller-Urey experiment of the 1950s which was once hailed as the key to the origin of life is now considered irrelevant by most scientists and how some are trying to revitalize the significance of that experiment. Go to [www.reasons.org/failed-comeback-efforts-reclaim-stanley-millers-legacy-part-1-2](http://www.reasons.org/failed-comeback-efforts-reclaim-stanley-millers-legacy-part-1-2).

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### ■ Who Gets Left Behind?

This *Christianity Today* article by Matthew Dickerson discusses how end times views shape the ways we view our earthly abode. As Christians, the belief in a bodily resurrection obliges us to work as redeeming and restoring influences in this present existence. Go to: [www.christianitytoday.com/cit/2011/june/whogetsleftbehind.html](http://www.christianitytoday.com/cit/2011/june/whogetsleftbehind.html).

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### ■ Let the Land Produce Vegetation

In this article, Dr. Hugh Ross addresses the claim that the creation of vegetation on the third creation day contradicts science. He points to a litany of new scientific discoveries that indicate vegetation was present on Earth millions of years earlier than was previously thought. Go to [www.reasons.org/let-land-produce-vegetation](http://www.reasons.org/let-land-produce-vegetation).

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### ■ Radio Silence

This Salvo article by Regis Nicoll discusses the fiftieth anniversary of the Search for Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence (SETI) and how, after a half-century of stellar eavesdropping, it has yet to detect a single intelligent signal. Yet the search continues and even welcomes tax-deductible donations. Go to [www.salvomag.com/new/articles/salvo14/14nicoll.php](http://www.salvomag.com/new/articles/salvo14/14nicoll.php).

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### ■ Cosmologists Race for Darwin Status

This tothesource article by Benjamin Wiker discusses why cosmologists long to do for the universe what Darwin did for biology—give a simple explanation for why everything exists. It is not just the honor they seek, but to demonstrate once and for all that God doesn't exist. Go to: [www.tothesource.org/5\\_18\\_2011/5\\_18\\_2011](http://www.tothesource.org/5_18_2011/5_18_2011).

# Book Review

## Archaeology of the Bible

James K. Hoffmeier  
Lion Hudson, 2008

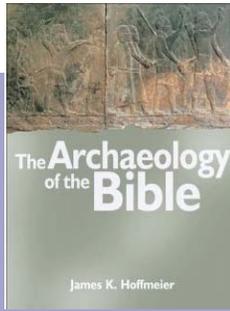
Reviewer: John Battle

If you're looking for an attractive, well balanced survey of biblical archaeology by a recognized expert, this volume would serve your purpose well. James Hoffmeier is an experienced archaeologist, specializing in the region of Egypt where the Israelites lived and through which they traversed to the Holy Land.

Hoffmeier, unlike many modern "minimalists," takes historical texts seriously, whether from the Bible or from Egyptian or other sources. While he teaches at a Christian institution and holds to an evangelical view of the Bible, he openly points out where the biblical record is strongly attested by archaeology and where that record has difficulties. He makes it clear that we do not presently have all the data, and probably never will; therefore, he says, we need to suspend judgment in some cases.

The book is well organized with an introduction to archaeology and its practice in the biblical lands. He then goes chronologically through the major periods of Israel's history and the times of the early church, showing the important archaeological discoveries that help to explain or illuminate the biblical text. Since his specialty is in the archaeology of the Egyptian settlement and exodus of Israel, his contributions in these chapters are especially interesting. He supports the so-called late date for the exodus. The chapters on the New Testament trace the major locations and artifacts for the life of Jesus, the early Judean church, and the cities of Paul. Since the book is fairly recent, it includes major recent discoveries including continuing debate on the Shroud of Turin and an interesting discussion on the disputed ossuary of James the brother of Jesus.

The *Archaeology of the Bible* is printed on high quality glossy paper, and the photography and graphics are excellent, making this book a good choice for a class or Bible study. I recommend this book for anyone interested in biblical history or archaeology, especially to see the broad sweep of archaeology's contribution to the study of the Bible.



- Rehoboam after Solomon's death is literal, the conscripts were controlled and directed with "whips."
3. The severe rule of the Israelites by their enemies.<sup>17</sup>
  4. Rule over the wicked by the righteous after death.<sup>18</sup>
  5. God's vanquished enemies ("them") ruled (or led) in the victory procession by the tribe of Benjamin, the smallest and weakest tribe.<sup>19</sup>
  6. The Messiah's absolute rule, as prophesied by David.<sup>20</sup>
  7. Absolute control by Israel of her enemies when God restores His people by defeating their enemies.<sup>21</sup>
  8. Rule of the people by priests, allowing or blocking access to God.<sup>22</sup>
  9. *Radah* with a negative—implying no control.<sup>23</sup> God through Ezekiel promises a restored Egypt will exert no control over its neighbors.
  10. Mistreatment and abuse of the weak in Israel by their stronger brothers.<sup>24</sup>

In the context of the popular "blissful Nirvana" concept, it is useful to evaluate the "minimum requirement" of the text. That is, what is the least restrictive usage of *kabash* and *radah*?

1. The minimum use of *kabash* seems to be assault.<sup>25</sup> Other uses involve enslavement and killing people, both of which increase in the level of brutality involved.
2. The minimum Mosaic use of *radah* seems to be God's instructions to the Israelites not to "rule with severity" over slaves who are fellow Israelites.<sup>26</sup> Mosaic literature says elsewhere that an Israelite slave provides "double the service of a hired man" to a fellow Israelite.<sup>27</sup> Hence, the minimum use implies submitting to the will of another, such as an employer or a benevolent master.
3. The minimum non-Mosaic use of *radah* is probably control of taskmasters over the conscripted workers in Solomon's building projects (including the temple).<sup>28</sup> Based on 1 Kings 12, they were at the very least treated like Israelite slaves; however, if whips were really used, they were governed more severely.

Words have meaning. When the various uses of *kabash* and *radah* unanimously convey such a strong connotation—with no clear indication of any other meaning in the context of Genesis 1—it is statistically significant. That same strong connotation must be deemed to apply to Genesis 1.

The uses of the words *kabash* ("subdue") and *radah*

("rule") in the Old Testament imply strong control exerted in the face of fierce resistance—or potential resistance. This helps us understand the true meaning of God's instructions to man after his creation: "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and *subdue* it; and *rule* over ... every living thing" (emphasis added).

Such commands cannot refer to the benign stewardship characteristic of the popular "blissful Nirvana" interpretation of the world before the fall. A command to subdue the earth and to rule over other living things implies conquest and subjugation of creation, as in: defeating and/or brutally ruling a strong enemy; subjugating another into slavery and/or bending slaves to a master's will; fighting humanity's sinful nature, and so on. By comparison, these are not the instructions given to a new CEO of a smoothly running company. These are the kind of instructions given to a CEO who must shake up an inefficient but potentially profitable company. God is commanding humans to confront and control a "very good" creation that needs organization and management.

The implication of violence and brutality in *kabash* and *radah* does not suggest humans should destroy creation—as some new CEOs will destroy a company to "save" it. The point is that creation will resist humanity's management like a strong army or like a free man resisting enslavement. Humans are to carry out God's goal of improving a creation that is already "very good" (*tob meod*). Creation can only realize its full potential through management by humankind.

Therefore, a logical interpretation of Genesis 1:28 is that men and women are formed in the image of God to continue God's work of bringing order out of chaos. God gives them the power and ability to complete His work by channeling and directing creation toward maximum productivity. In this way, humans fulfill their destiny as God's image-bearers. Yet, the task is not easy. God challenges men and women, as a father challenges his children, in order to mature them.

God's instructions to "be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth" do not only mean to reproduce. Humans are to make God's creation more fruitful by cultivating the soil, domesticating animals, etc.

It is indisputable that fallen humanity has abused its role as steward of God's creation; that is called sin. But human sinfulness does not detract from the central responsibility of completing creation by making it more productive. Edible fruits and berries grow on their own, but do so in much greater quantity and quality when they are cultivated. Anything cultivated and harvested becomes plentiful; and this includes both plants and creatures.

What changed with the fall? What was different after God "cursed" the ground with "thorns and thistles," and man was doomed to procure food "by the sweat of your

face"?<sup>29</sup> The options are:

1. A radical system change, including the death of vertebrate animals for the first time (necessitating the transformation of certain creatures into carnivores, which includes modifications to their mouths, digestive systems, and instincts). This is the view taken by many young-earth creationists, as represented by Dr. Jonathan Sarfati.
2. A minor system change, something less than a radical modification of certain creatures into carnivores, but perhaps a hardening of the soil and allowing "thorns and thistles" to grow.
3. A change of venue by removing Adam from a garden with perfect growing conditions to something more typical of the world today.
4. An internal change in man, such that work which was fun or easy before becomes arduous or difficult. This could be a physical and/or mental modification.
5. A combination of two or more of the above.

By using the words *kabash* and *radah* in Genesis 1:28, Moses, the likely author, strongly implies that creation was harsh in the beginning. Conditions before the fall did not reflect the popular perception of the "blissful Nirvana." Hence, the radical system change suggested in the first option seems unlikely.

It is much more likely that the change in conditions after the fall principally represented a change in degree, as suggested by options 2-5. There is substantial evidence for this position. For example, God's curse on Eve after the fall was "I will greatly *multiply* your pain in childbirth, in pain you shall bring forth children" (emphasis added). A simplistic translation of the Hebrew even reads: "in pain I shall increase your pain." God does not introduce pain after the fall. Pain existed before the fall; God merely increases it!

The same holds true for God's warning to Adam about the forbidden fruit: "in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die." The Hebrew *mot tamut* reads "to die you will die," which implies that Adam is probably familiar with the concept of death.

What is the degree of change after the fall? Which of the options 2-5 is more likely? An important clue is found in the work God tells man to perform before and after the fall. Before the fall, man is to "cultivate the ground"; after the fall, his task is still to "cultivate the ground". The same Hebrew word, *abad*, is used in both cases. However, the instruction from before the fall is subtly different from after the fall.

Nevertheless, Adam and Eve before the fall were not lounging about eating grapes and drinking nectar like Greek deities, as the "blissful Nirvana" view suggests.

Adam had to put out effort for his food. Without humans, the world could be an overgrown jungle, where fast-growing, unfruitful vines crowd out food-producing plants (as the kudzu vine does in the American southeast if not aggressively controlled).

At the very least, the world could not fulfill its potential without human beings. This point is emphasized by the unambiguous statement in Genesis 2 that before humanity, there was “no shrub of the [cultivated] field” and “no plant of the [cultivated] field” (also using *abad*). One of the reasons for this was the absence of humans to do the cultivating. Without humans, herds of sheep provided easy prey to “a lion or a bear” and other predators. By contrast, with people in control, fruitful vineyards are carefully pruned to maximize production and herds of sheep are led “beside still waters” by shepherds prepared to kill their predators.

Humans sinned at the fall and, therefore, “creation groans” due to mismanagement. But the fall did not usher in a radical system change to God’s creation, introducing conditions such as decay and the death of vertebrate animals where there were none before. Harsh conditions were part of creation in the beginning. Indeed, men and women were created to manage and control those conditions.

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**Note:** This article is presented in two parts on the RTB website and can be found by searching for the key words “very good world look like.”

#### Endnotes:

1. Note that this is the Hebrew *comparative* form of the adjective, not the superlative; this implies that the world was in better condition, but not in perfect, or even in the best, condition.
2. Jonathan Sarfati, *Refuting Compromise: A Biblical and Scientific Refutation of “Progressive Creationism”* (Billions of Years) As Popularized by Astronomer Hugh Ross (Green Forest, AR: MasterBooks, 2004), 195. In reading the quote and the title of this work, the reader should note that Dr. Sarfati engages in a type of argument known as “poisoning the well.” The term “compromise” carries the idea of unfaithfulness and rejection of

biblical authority.

3. Francis Brown et al., ed., *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), 461.
4. Brown et al., ed., *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 921-2.
5. Numbers 32:22, 29; Joshua 18:1 (*subdued*, NASB).
6. 2 Samuel 8:11; 1 Chronicles 22:18 (*subdued*, NASB).
7. Zechariah 9:15 (*devour and trample*, NASB).
8. 2 Chronicles 28:10 (*subjugate*, NASB).
9. Nehemiah 5:5 (*forced into bondage*, NASB).
10. Jeremiah 34:16 (*brought into subjection*, NASB).
11. Esther 7:8 (*assault*, NASB).
12. Micah 7:18 (*tread under foot*, NASB).
13. Leviticus 26:17 (*rule*, NASB).
14. Numbers 24:19 (*have dominion*, NASB); this is Balaam’s prophesy.
15. 1 Kings 4:24 (*had dominion*, NASB); Psalm 72:8 (*rule*, NASB). Since Psalm 72 is Messianic prophesy, this use of “rule” also refers to the Messiah’s rule. However, since the context is comparison with the rule of Solomon, it seems appropriate to group Psalm 72:8 with 1 Kings 4:24.
16. 1 Kings 5:15, 9:23; 2 Chronicles 8:10 (*ruled*, NASB).
17. Nehemiah 9:28 (*rule*, NASB).
18. Psalm 49:14 (*rule*, NASB). The severity is less clear in this instance, but the context of the psalm is that good people triumph over the wicked after death—even if the wicked may triumph in life.
19. Psalm 68:27 (*ruling*, NASB). Although the antecedent of “them” is ambiguous, it is unlikely that the antecedent is “the princes of Judah” since Benjamin ruled Judah only during the reign of Saul and the context of the Psalm is God’s defeat of His enemies and bringing them under the rule of God’s people
20. Psalm 110:2 (*rule*, NASB). Although precise meaning of the phrase that the Messiah will “rule in the midst of [his] enemies” is not clear, the context of the psalm implies absolute Messianic control, in particular His judgment of the nations (Psalm 110:6, NAS) after He “shatter[s] kings” (Psalm

110:5, NASB).

21. Isaiah 14:2, 6 (*rule, subdued*, NASB).
22. Jeremiah 5:31 (*rule*, NASB). The context of this passage is the unfaithfulness of the people of Judah, which will bring about conquest by Babylon. Although the passage makes clear that the unfaithful majority “love” the fact that unfaithful priests ignore God’s laws, the book of Jeremiah also details how these unfaithful priests severely persecuted those who followed God, like Jeremiah, Uriah, and Baruch.
23. Ezekiel 29:15 (*rule*, NASB).
24. Ezekiel 34:4 (*dominated*, NASB).
25. Esther 7:8 (*assault*, NASB).
26. Leviticus 25:43, 46, 53 (*rule*, NASB).
27. Deuteronomy 15:18 (NASB).
28. 1 Kings 5:15, 9:23; 2 Chronicles 8:10 (*ruled*, NASB).
29. Genesis 3:17-19 (NASB)



## Seattle Chapter Reasons To Believe

### Who Are We?

The Seattle Chapter of Reasons To Believe is a local extension of the worldwide, interdenominational Reasons To Believe ministry. We exist to support our parent organization and foster local involvement in the ministry. We serve the Puget Sound and are composed of Christians of different ages and backgrounds.

It is our conviction the same God who created the universe inspired the Bible. Therefore, God’s Word must agree with the facts of nature. We reject the notion that science and the Bible are at odds and provide a scientifically-sound and Biblically-faithful alternative to Darwinism and young-Earth creationism.

### What Do We Do?

Our mission is to remove the doubts of skeptics and strengthen the faith of believers. We provide scientific, historical and philosophical evidence that supports the Christian worldview and helps remove barriers to a belief in God, the Bible and the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We carry out this mission by:

- Helping people access RTB and other scientifically and biblically sound resources.
- Bringing nationally-known speakers into the area to promote the scientific reliability of the Bible.
- Assembling a team of local apologists to address questions about science and the Bible.
- Building alliances with local churches, ministries and groups to maximize the exposure of RTB.
- Reaching out to unbelievers with gentleness and respect, to expose them to God’s word.

We welcome your involvement and support. For more information, contact us at [seattle@reasons.org](mailto:seattle@reasons.org). Tax-deductible donations can be sent to: Seattle RTB, PO Box 99683, Seattle, WA 98139-0683.

### Questions? Get Answers.

If you’re looking for scientific support for your faith or answers to questions about God, the Bible, and science, contact us at [seattle@reasons.org](mailto:seattle@reasons.org). Or call the RTB hotline seven days a week, 5:00 to 7:00 PM at 626-335-5282.