

Biblical Principles

ONE IN A SERIES

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The Sovereignty of God

Sov'er.eign.ty [deriv. of L. *super* above, *regnum* rule] Supreme power, absolute supremacy, the possession of the highest power. Autonomous, all-powerful. Free from external control; having total dominion.

The Biblical Principle

God is Sovereign Ruler of the Universe: Supreme over all the earth and all therein; there is none other. He directs all things and works all things "according to the counsel of His will" (Ephesians 1:11). *God is the source of all power* (Job 38:8, 11). All power belongs to Him and flows from Him. God is The Creator of all that is; to The Creator belongs the created. In all things He is to have preeminence (Colossians 1:18). "I am the LORD your God . . . You shall have no other gods before Me" (Exodus 20:2, 3).

This is the first, the *root*, principle from which other Biblical principles stem and on which other principles stand. (See also Matthew 5:18; I Peter 1:24-25.)

Application of the Principle

Each individual (and each nation) must make a choice:

Either God is sovereign, and Christ is King, or man (or men) will be sovereign.

Either God is God or Man (or men) will "be as gods."

For Christians who commit their lives to Christ, the choice is clear: *God is sovereign, Christ is King*. The Christian must make Christ Lord of all (for if He is not, then He is Lord not at all). Thus, the godly Christian acknowledges and seeks to be guided by the first, *the root*, biblical principle: The

Supreme Sovereignty of the Living, True, and Triune God.

What is it that The Sovereign God expects (requires) of His? "If you love Me," said Christ, "keep My commandments" (John 14:15).

And what are His commandments?
This:

"You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve" (Matthew 4:10b).

Examples of God's total and continuing sovereignty over the works of His hands (His creation): He caused the Red Sea to part and its waters to stand as walls (Exodus 14); the earth to open and the guilty rebels to fall into the pit (Numbers 16); He ordered the sun to stand still (Joshua 10) and to go backward 10 degrees on the dial of Ahaz (Isaiah 38:8). He made the ravens to carry food to Elijah (I Kings 17), iron to float on the water (II Kings 6:6), lions in their den to be tame for Daniel (Daniel 6). Christ turned the water to wine (John 2:1-11), raised Lazarus, Jairus' daughter, and the widow's son from the dead (John 11; Mark 5:32-43; Luke 7:11-17), fed the five thousand with five loaves and two fishes (Mark 6:32-44)—and rose from the grave to conquer death and reign forever (John 10:18). *Of such is the power and the glory and the sovereignty of the Lord God.*

And these:

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two command-

ments hang all the Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 22:37-40).

Self-Government

(The *Internal* Flow of Power and Force)

(NOTE: One of the central properties of sovereignty is “power.” Sovereignty may be understood to be “the source of power” (that which is in power is sovereign). In this regard, consider the definition of government used in this series on Biblical principles: “Government is the flow of power and force” (force being defined as the application of power; e.g., Christ governs even the elements: as Sovereign, He used His power to force the tempest to cease (Luke 8:24); civil authorities use their “power” to force citizens to obey their dictates—to enforce their laws).

“As he [a man] thinks in his heart, so is he.” “Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life” (Proverbs 23:7a; Proverbs 4:23). (See also Matthew 12:34.)

The Sovereignty of God

“Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You. Blessed are You, O LORD! Teach me Your statutes” (Psalm 119:11-12).

That which is sovereign in an individual’s life is the source of the flow of power and force which is his or her self-government. That which is sovereign, that which is the source of power in a person’s life, controls the person’s heart and mind, directs the person’s thoughts, establishes his or her presuppositions, determines the values and standards of morality, sets life’s course and prescribes the individual’s actions in the here and now—and his destiny in the hereafter (Deuteronomy 11:26-27 and 28:2, 15).

“He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God” (John 3:18).

When a person truly accepts Christ as Savior, he also acknowledges the first principle of Christian self-government—“There is another King, one Jesus!” When that occurs, life is truly transformed!

Some Key Scriptures

- HE does according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand or say to Him, “What have You done?” (Daniel 4:35).
- “Yours, O LORD, is the greatness, the power and the glory, the victory and the majesty; for all that is in heaven and in earth is Yours; Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and You are exalted as head over all and You reign over all” (I Chronicles 29:11-12a).
- “O LORD God of our fathers, are You not God in heaven, and do You not rule over all the kingdoms of the nations, and in Your hand is there not power and might, so that no one is able to withstand You?” (II Chronicles 20:6).
- “I know that You can do everything, and that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You” (Job 42:2).
- “Look to Me, and be saved, all you ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other. I have sworn by Myself; the word has gone out of My mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that to Me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall take an oath” (Isaiah 45:22-23).
- “For there is no authority except from God” (Romans 13:1). “By me kings reign, and rulers decree justice. By me princes rule, and nobles, all the judges of the earth” (Proverbs 8:15-16).
- “Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens. . . . Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?” (Romans 9:18, 21).

(See also Job, chapters 37-41; Psalm 66:7; Isaiah 9:6-7; 42:8; Jeremiah 10:10, 12; Matthew 28:18; John 17:2; Colossians 1:16-17; Revelation 4:11; etc.)

Not just improved, *transformed*. That which is old, shoddy and degenerate, is passed away: All things have become new (II Corinthians 5:17). With a new source of power (sovereignty) comes a new source of life! Christ Jesus! [He Who is "The Way, The Truth and The Life" (John 14:6) becomes just that and all of that. He Who is The Sovereign of all becomes, in fact as well as name, the individual's King, his ruling authority.] Gone is double-minded religiosity; come to stay is the *burning faith* which inspired and impelled the early Christians (Luke 24:32).

And with it comes power! The power which flows from The Creator to His very own. The internal power that transforms the person and can transform the world—the internal power which, when manifested externally, can turn the world right side up (Acts 17:6)! Only godly internal (self) government can produce a godly external (civil) government. One of God's laws of nature is: *the internal produces the eternal* (Matthew 7:17-20).

"Christianity is not merely a theology . . . it is more than the true doctrine of salvation; it is also the one correct interpretation of life and the world. It is a comprehensive system of all revealed truth, not only the truth of God's special revelation, the Bible, but of His general revelation in nature and history as well. . . . *The religion of the Christian man (and woman) embraces the whole of life.*" (Dr. R. B. Kuiper on "The Whole Duty of the Christian," 1935 sermon).

This then, is true: When God is sovereign in a person's life, the greater the flow of internal (self) government, the less the need for external (civil) government. Conversely, when God is rejected as King, the greater the flow of ego-directed power, the greater the need for civil government. As William Penn observed, "Men will be governed by God (His sovereignty) or they will be ruled by tyrants" (the power and force of those who deny God).

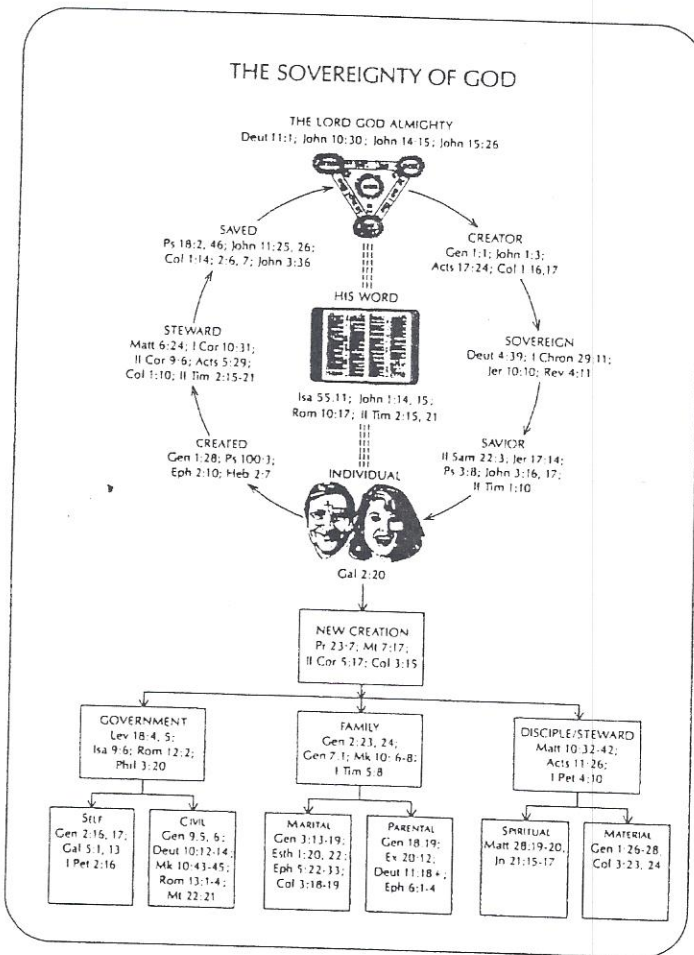
Civil Government
(External Flow of Power and Force)

Just as that which is sovereign in the life of the individual is the source of the power and force of self-government, so that which is sovereign in the life of a nation is the source of the flow or power and force that manifests itself as civil government.

That which is sovereign in a nation's affairs (government) controls its policies, sets its standards, colors its laws (and the spirit and enforcement of those laws), determines the governmental course of action, and determines its survival and its fate (II Chronicles 7:14, 19-20).

When God is recognized as Sovereign (as He was in the beginning of the American Republic) then man and his civil condition (his State) will be governed according to the laws of God, and in harmony with Biblical principles and precepts; there is little conflict between godly citizens and godly governors (servants of God).

"I will walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people" (Leviticus 26:12).



But when man (or men—the State) is held to be the supreme sovereign, then man and his civil condition will be ruled by the laws and values of man playing god—either man, the individual (*anarchy*) or men, the body politic (*collectivism*). When that occurs, there is constant conflict between godly citizens and ungodly civil authorities. For those who “must obey God rather than men” answer to a Higher Authority (Acts 5:29).

“For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a servant of Christ” (Galatians 1:10). “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge” (Act 4:19b).

To seek to please men and their dictates rather than God and His law-word is to reject the Sovereignty of God.

Relating the Principle to an Issue

When the Lord God brought forth the Israelites from Egypt, “out of the house of bondage,” He entered into covenant with them (Exodus 19:5–8): as Lord, He also became their civil King and they became His kingdom, a holy nation. When we, through the Blood of Christ, are brought out of the bondage of sin and death, we also enter into covenant with Him (John 3:16). When we accept Christ as our Savior and our King, our Sovereign, we become His very own, *citizens of His kingdom* (Philippians 3:20).

Thus arises a key issue: *His church vs. the State*. As His, we are to keep His commandments; God’s First Commandment becomes especially binding upon us:

“You shall have no other gods before (above) Me” (Exodus 20:3). No other god, no other kings, no other sovereign. We are not to bow down to them or serve them “For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God” (Exodus 10:5a).

Rev. T. Robert Ingram points out that the First Amendment to the Constitution “was, in fact, and is, a paraphrase of that First Commandment given Moses. . . . [T]he First Article of the so-called Bill of Rights . . . offered the most sophisticated machinery yet devised by Christian men for pinning down the agencies of temporal power and preventing them from encroaching

upon the total power that can rest only in Jesus Christ.

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.’

“I am the LORD your God . . . You shall have no other gods before Me.’

“The basic law of the United States guarantees that Congress shall not usurp the authority over worship and by doing so put Congress in the place of God. It applies to Congress and hits at the most immediate and present danger to the acknowledged Lordship of Christ.”

That First Amendment, as Rev. Ingram emphasizes, was not simply a matter of division between states’ rights and federal power, it concerned “God vs. other gods.”

Americans, including many American Christians, seem to have forgotten what our Founding Fathers knew so well and held so dear: The truth that only God is God; that He is Sovereign above and over all.

Could it be that where those men of old recognized the supremacy of the Lord God, many of today’s professing Christians settle for a piecemeal faith and a compromised concept of Almighty God? That they have been led astray by the “pastoral pipings” sounded by so many pulpits? The God fashioned by so many in the 20th century is not the God of our Fathers, not the God of the Bible.

Only when we, as Biblical Christians, have the wisdom and the courage to assert and apply the principle of God’s sovereignty—the *Crown Rights of Christ Jesus*—only then shall we truly know His flow of *internal* power which can produce that *external* flow of power and force to reduce Caesar to his Bible-based dimensions (a ministry of justice as a servant of God).

I am the LORD, that is My name; and My glory I will not give to another, nor My praise to graven images” (Isaiah 42:8).

(NOTE: All Scripture is from the New King James Version.)

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