

God Is Sovereign And Has A Purpose In Government

I. Introduction

II. God is Sovereign

- A. How do we define sovereign or sovereignty?
1. Encyclopedia Britannica – The ultimate overseer or authority in the decision making process of the state and in the maintenance of order
 2. Webster’s – Supreme power over: freedom from external control: the controlling influence
 3. New Bible Dictionary – One who makes his own plans and carries them out in his own time and way
 4. Vine’s – One who possesses supreme authority; one who possesses absolute rule and authority
 5. Class Definition: One who possesses absolute rule and authority, is free from external control and makes and carries out his plans in his own time and way
- B. How do we know that God is sovereign?
1. The Scriptures declare it!
 - a. God’s sovereignty is foundational to the scriptures
 - b. Divine sovereignty means that God actually is God
 - c. Scripture identifies Him as sovereign because He satisfies the definition of the ultimate sovereign
 - d. Scripture identifies Him as sovereign because He is the Creator
 - e. Scripture identifies Him as sovereign because of His attributes
 - f. Scripture identifies His as sovereign by His titles
 2. He satisfies the definition
 - a. He has absolute rule and authority...

Psalm 103:19 *“The Lord has established His throne in the heaven, and His sovereignty rules over all.”*
 - b. He is free from external control...

Isaiah 46:9-10 *“...For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, Declaring the end from the beginning...Saying, ‘My purpose will be established and I will accomplish all My good pleasure’”*

- c. He makes His own plans...
Act 2:23 *“...this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.”*
 - d. He carries them out in his own time and way
Daniel 2:21 *“It is He who changes the times and the epochs; He removes kings and establishes kings”*
Acts 1:7 *“He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority”*
3. He is the Creator
- a. Because He created it He owns it
Psalm 24:1-2 *“The earth is the LORD'S, and all it contains, The world, and those who dwell in it. For He has founded it upon the seas And established it upon the rivers.”*
 - b. Because He created it He deserves glory and honor
Revelation 4:11 *‘Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created.’*
4. He is sovereign because of His attributes
- a. All powerful (omnipotent), all knowing (omniscient), all present (omnipresent), eternal, righteous, judge, etc.
1 Chronicles 29:11-12 *“Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, indeed everything that is in the heavens and the earth; Yours is the dominion, O LORD, and You exalt Yourself as head over all. “Both riches and honor come from You, and You rule over all, and in Your hand is power and might; and it lies in Your hand to make great and to strengthen everyone.”*
5. He is identified sovereign by title
- a. Master, Lord, Lord of Lords, King, King of Kings, Ruler
Daniel 2:47 *“Surely your God is a God of gods and a **Lord of kings** and a revealer of mysteries, since you have been able to reveal this mystery.”*

1 Timothy 6:15b-16 “...*He who is the blessed and only **Sovereign**, the **King of kings** and **Lord of lords**, who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light*”

C. Over what is God sovereign?

1. He is sovereign over all

a. Remember

Psalm 103:19 “*The Lord has established His throne in the heaven, and **His sovereignty rules over all.***”

b. The following is a list of specific things over which God is sovereign

2. The Spirit World

a. Angels (Daniel 8:16; 9:22-23; 10:11-12; Revelation 22:6)

b. Satan (Job 1:9-12, 2:16; Matthew 4:10-11)

c. Demons (1 Samuel 16:14; Jude 6)

3. Nature

a. The Elements Wind and Rain (Jonah 1:4, 15; Matthew 8:24-27)

b. Land and Sea

i. Korah’s Rebellion - Numbers 16:30-33

ii. Parting of the Red Sea - Exodus 14:21-22

c. Animals

i. Plagues (gnats, locust, frogs) – Exodus 8-10

ii. Bears – 2 Kings 2:23-24

iii. Lions – Daniel 6:22

iv. Fish – Jonah 1:17; Matthew 27:17

d. “Natural Law”

i. Iron Ax head floats - 2 Kings 6:6

ii. Sun stands still - Joshua 10:13

iii. Feeding of the 5000 - Mark 6:41-44

iv. All healings

4. Salvation

a. Chooses/Predestines

Ephesians 1:4-5 “*just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world,*

that we would be holy and blameless before Him In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,”

Romans 8:29-30 *“For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.”*

b. Hardens

Romans 9:17-18 *“For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "FOR THIS VERY PURPOSE I RAISED YOU UP, TO DEMONSTRATE MY POWER IN YOU, AND THAT MY NAME MIGHT BE PROCLAIMED THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE EARTH." So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires.”*

5. Our daily lives – Providence

a. Whether we acknowledge it or not God is active in our daily lives

b. Provides power

2 Timothy 1:7-8 *“For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline. Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God”*

c. Provides direction

Proverbs 16:9 *“The mind of man plans his way, But the LORD directs his steps”*

d. Preserves us

1 Peter 1:5 *“who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”*

e. Works grace and chastens our Evil

i. Naomi’s sons and Ruth – Ruth 1:4

ii. The people of Israel – Daniel 9:4-19

f. Actively restrains evil people – Jesus and not his hour – John 7:30; 8:20; 13:1

g. Softens those opposed –

- i. Joseph with Potiphar, the Jailer and Pharaoh (Gen 39:3, 4, 24; Acts 7:10)
- ii. Daniel with Ashpenaz (Daniel 1:9)
- h. Works through the evil of others
 - i. Assyrians, Babylonians, Medes and Persians, Greeks, Romans
 - ii. Jesus execution (1 Thessalonians 2:14-16)
- 6. Human Authority/Government
 - Daniel 5:21 ... *“the Most High God is ruler over the realm of mankind and that He sets over it whomever He wishes”*
 - Romans 13:1 *“... to the governing authorities For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.”*

III. God’s Purpose In Government

- A. What is the purpose of government?
 - 1. There are probably as many answers to this as there are people
 - 2. Answers.com says...

“The purpose of government is to provide a system in which individuals give a portion of their freedom in order to pursue needs and wants without the fears that are inherent in a state of anarchy... Therefore, at its most basic level, **the purpose of government is to protect the people from threats**, both within and without.” [2]
 - 3. The US Founding Father’s said...
 - a. US Declaration of Independence

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.--**That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men**, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed,”
 - b. US Constitution

“We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, **establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty** to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.”

4. A libertarian view says...
“The purpose of government is to defend its constituents against aggression. Period. ... Freedom is the ability to exercise one's will in the absence of coercion. Therefore, freedom is impossible once government is allowed to perform any function other than defense.” [3]
5. An Islamist view says...
“The purpose of political authority is to establish the religion of God in its entirety and make his word supreme” [4]

B. What is God’s purpose in government?

1. To accomplish His will...work out His plan of salvation for both the Gentiles and the Jews, ultimately resulting in the establishment of His kingdom
2. One of the most succinctly put reasons is presented by Paul in Romans 13:1-5
*“Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves. For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same; for **it is a minister of God to you for good**. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for **it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil**. Therefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience’ sake.”*
3. God establishes governments, all governments, to accomplish 3 things
 - a. Restrain Evil...
 - i. by causing “terror” so people do not behave as badly as they might (v2)
 - ii. be a deterrent to people’s evil
 - b. Promote Good...vs 3-4a
 - i. By rewarding those who do good...
Daniel (Daniel 2:46-48; 6:28) and Joseph (Genesis 41:39-45)
 - ii. By protecting us...
Paul (Acts 19:37-39; 21:30-35)

- iii. Allowing us to live peacefully so that the gospel may go out...
1 Timothy 2:1-4; 1 Peter 2:13-17
- iv. And in a theocracy... Care for those who absolutely can't care for themselves...
The fatherless, the widow and the alien (Deuteronomy 14:28-29)
- c. Perform Justice/ Bring Judgment / Punish the evil doer
 - i. Both internally and externally
 - ii. God uses governments to bring judgment on other nations (Habakkuk 1)
 - iii. God uses governments to bring judgment on it's own people (vs 4b)
 - iv. There are guidelines for how this punishment is to be meted out but that is for another lesson

IV. Our Response

A. How are we to respond to God's sovereignty?

1. Fear

- a. Matthew 10:28 *"Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."*
- b. Annanias and Saphira
Acts 5:1-11 *"Great fear seized the whole church and all who heard about these events."*

2. Obedience

James 1:21-22 *"But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves."*

3. Determination

Daniel 3:16-18 *"Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego replied to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to give you an answer concerning this matter. "If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. "But even if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.""*

4. Thankfulness and Joy

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 *“Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”*

5. Worship

Daniel 2:20, 23 *“Let the name of God be blessed forever and ever, For wisdom and power belong to Him... To You, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise, For You have given me wisdom and power”*

Daniel 4:37 *“Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise, exalt and honor the King of heaven, for all His works are true and His ways just, and He is able to humble those who walk in pride.”*

6. Freedom from anxiety

a. Don’t worry about tomorrow – Matthew 6:25-34

b. We can’t even do the little thing of adding time to our lives

B. What is our response to government

1. Even though God has established every government they are still under the power of Satan who is the ruler of this world (1 John 5:19; Luke 4:5-6; John 12:31, 14:30, 16:11)

2. Even in that case we as believers have specific responsibilities to government authority

3. As we will see in Daniel, we should be exemplary citizens except where we might be commanded to sin

4. Paul states in Romans 13:1, 6-7

“Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. ... For because of this you also pay taxes, for rulers are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing. Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.”

5. So here are a few ways we are to respond

a. We are to obey and submit to them (1 Peter 2:13-14)

b. We are to respect them (v7)

c. We are to honor them (1 Peter 2:17)

- d. Pray for them (1 Timothy 2:2)
 - e. Live at peace (Romans 12:18)
 - f. We are to pay our taxes (v6)
6. We will see all of these things exemplified in the life of Daniel and His friends

V. Conclusion

- A. What is Government's Effect on us as it fulfills its responsibilities?
1. How governments choose to implement the 3 responsibilities will have an effect us
 2. Will have a direct effect on what you can or can't do
 3. Will have direct effect on what you can or can't own or count as "your" possession
 4. However because God is sovereign over all earthly authority and establishes all earthly authority, if we follow his commands, we can rest in the fact that what is going on both personally and globally is under His control and He will continue to care for us (Hebrews 13:5-6)
- B. All this to say...God is sovereign over everything
1. If we are not acting foolishly or sinfully we can relax
 2. God is not surprised by anything
 3. God is in control of everything
 4. We know we have exactly what God wants us to have at any given moment
 5. My prayer is that as we see with Daniel, our righteous responses will promote God's purposes as He exercises His sovereignty

References

1. Unless otherwise indicated all scripture quotations are from the New American Standard Bible (NASB), 1995
2. http://wiki.answers.com/Q/What_is_the_purpose_of_a_government
3. <http://www.dailypaul.com/131683/the-three-ps-things-government-cannot-and-should-not-do>
4. <http://islamiliveforit.blogspot.com/2011/04/purpose-of-government-in-islam.html>
5. **John MacArthur**, *Why Government Can't Save You: An Alternative to Political Activism* (Nashville, TN: Word, 2000)