

Gospel Gleanings, "...especially the parchments"

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God Shall Prevail in the End

Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen. (1 Timothy 6:15–16, KJV 1900)

We often hear the quip, "Who is in charge?" Particularly when tragedies occur, those who feel the sting of the event may ask, "Why did God..." Either they blame God outright for the event, or they blame Him indirectly by complaining that He could have prevented it. Both attitudes indicate a significant misunderstanding regarding the nature of the universe that God created and the manner in which He governs it. In fact, both attitudes imply that God must rule in something of a robotic or puppeteer fashion, "...Or he isn't really God." And both attitudes fail to grasp the Biblical revelation regarding God's governance of this world.

Which in his times he shall shew.... Notice the future tense of the verb. At a future time, God shall show or demonstrate fully His victory. Obviously, something about His supreme authority and rule is now obscured, but obscurity does not mean that He does not hold the deserved titles that appear as distinctly and exclusively His in these verses. This question shall frame our study for a season.

Occasionally people use the word "sovereignty" to refer to God's governance over the universe. While this is not a bad word, it is not a Bible word, and it often takes on many meanings that are not affirmed in Scripture. Sovereignty means that God is the final authority or ruler over the universe. There is none higher or greater than He. He answers to no one for His actions. However, to say that God must finitely and actively control every event that occurs, "...or He is not really sovereign," contradicts the teachings of Scripture.

How do we resolve this dilemma? Our first goal should be to seek Scripture's revelation of God's governance, not human philosophy's explanations that ignore or wrest Scripture. Start with the first major stage after creation, the Garden of Eden. God made Adam and started growing Adam toward His intended assignment to man. As Adam learned about the amazing natural world that God had created, he needed a companion; no surprise to God. God made Eve for Adam at the time when Adam needed her as his appropriate companion.

As we read the account of God's interactions with Adam and Eve in the Garden, second and third chapters of Genesis, we see a number of obvious attitudes in the nature of God's governance over Adam and Eve. He gave Adam one simple rule of

conduct, one law to govern his behavior. As is necessary with any such behavioral rule, God also warned Adam of the consequences of violation, should Adam choose to ignore that prohibitive law. We see no indication of God taking on a cosmic puppeteer's role in this scenario. God gave an intelligent, moral creature a simple rule that he was clearly able to keep or not to keep. The choice was Adam's, not God's. God affirmed His intent in the substance of the law He gave. Adam could keep the law and permanently enjoy the blessings of the Garden. He could break the law and die. The choice, the moral choice, was his, not God's.

Consistently from this time forward, God gave His moral law to man with His righteous commandment to keep it, and with His righteous warning of the consequences, should man choose to violate it. We see this moral governance beginning in the Garden till God gave the Law to Moses. While Jesus fulfilled that law, and New Testament believers are no longer under it, God continues to give His people His Law and commandment to obey.

To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. (1 Corinthians 9:21)

In his ministry, Paul reached out to all kinds of people, even to "lawless" Gentiles, but he did not convey to them that God did not yet hold His people accountable for their conduct, "...under the law to Christ."

It is this consistent pattern of Scripture that leads me to describe God's present, sovereign governance of the world in which we live as a "Moral Governance," as distinguished from the cosmic puppeteer or finite "Orchestrator" of every event that occurs. God distinctly reveals in Scripture that He gloriously intervenes in human activities, but Scripture also teaches that God's intervention always complies with His personal moral character and with His established moral governance over mankind in general and His people in particular. As we walk by faith, we often encounter frequent evidences of God's gracious intervention in our lives. Every such intervention

affirms our Lord's gracious love for us and His righteous character. We need never live in morbid fear of a sinister, schizophrenic deity who operates under a dualistic mode, sometimes according a public persona of holy righteousness and at other times according to a sinister "secret will" mode of either directly or indirectly causing sinful things that he then "orchestrates" so as to bring eventual good out of them. God always brings good out of His interventions, but He does not do cause the sinful things that occur, either directly or indirectly. Scripture never indicates such a divine dualism.

Psalms 8 affirms that God assigned to man the responsibility of serving as a faithful steward over His physical universe. A steward doesn't own the property he oversees. It belongs to another, and the steward manages his oversight according to the owner's directions. Humanity has largely ignored God, the owner of the material universe, often man's reckless and immoral abuse of God's universe causes many of the catastrophic events that we observe in nature. Man causes the event by irresponsible and immoral stewardship, but that same man dares to blame God for the calamity when it occurs. Man wants to be the owner, not the steward, but he insists on having God close by to accept the blame when his own sins cause results that he doesn't like. Consider one example. When I was a young man, the medical field started using a new drug that they thought would help pregnant women. Because they failed to carefully test the drug before releasing it for use, they were surprised when tragically deformed babies were born to mothers who used thalidomide during their pregnancy. God didn't cause these deformed babies to be born into the world. Man developed the drug, and man started using it before thoroughly testing it to ensure its safety.

Has God ever been involved in the birth of a baby with physical defects? Yes, indeed He has, but the episode on record in Scripture also records that He healed the man. (John ninth chapter) While John doesn't specifically state that God caused the man's blindness, Jesus did tell the disciples that the blindness occurred in this instance "...that the works of God should be made manifest in him." (John 9:3) Nothing in this chapter, or elsewhere in Scripture, indicates that the Holy Spirit intended that we view this single episode as revealing a divine pattern to be applied to every child born with a birth defect, any more than Scripture indicates that a woman with health problems should spend her fortunes on medical quacks before literally reaching out to touch Jesus' garment. To reason from a single event in a class, such as the John 9 episode with the blind man and force that conclusion onto all events in the class is a logical fallacy called the parts to the whole fallacy. Such reasoning, simply analyzed, is neither logical nor rational.

We don't use this word "Potentate" every day. What does it mean? The word refers to a ruler, one

with great authority. We see men rise and fall in national governments all the time. In our country, we see both men and political parties rise and fall. Regardless of the country or of the political party, or the individuals in the party, we seldom see a ruler who practices everything he promised before coming into power. We sadly see human depravity in high places just as clearly as in the ordinary events of life. At times we see political leaders who manifest little or no moral conviction whatever. They seem willing to say anything necessary to gain their power, and, once in power, they will say anything necessary to keep that power. Pity the people under the power of such a ruler.

Before we study God's rule, His filling the role of "Potentate," we need to study Paul's description of His rule. Paul's first adjective is "blessed." At first glance, this might seem to be an unusual term to describe God. We understand the idea of God blessing us, but how is God Himself "blessed"? First, He is blessed by His faithful performance of His will and works according to His character, never in any way compromising His righteousness. He never does something with partial joy and partial regret that He didn't do it differently. He is "Happy," an implied idea to this word, with everything that He does. He has no need to hide anything He does behind a "secret will" that ignores His moral character and plays out the diabolical dualism so sadly imposed upon Him by folks who create God in their image rather than honoring Him for His image and glory.

*But he is in one mind, and who can turn him?
and what his soul desireth, even that he doeth.
(Job 23:13)*

What God does is always in harmony with His "mind" and His soul's desire. We may safely rejoice that our God so operates in every event when He steps into our lives to bless and to guide.

Paul further adds that our Lord is the only such Potentate. Occasionally you hear preachers refer to passages that refer to the "god of this world" (2 Corinthians 4:4 as one example) and use such passages to teach that Satan rules this world despite Jesus' desire to do so. Never doubt that God has not relinquished His rule to any, especially to Satan. Satan constantly works to deceive, to convince unthinking humans that he rules over God, but we must remember that the primary speaker of such ideas has a consistent reputation for being the greatest liar of all existence. So why should we believe anything that he says? Even the pretentious appearance of his power shall fade away when King Jesus "...in his times..." shows the reality of His dominion.

Paul will add a number of significant descriptions to guide us to a full knowledge of our Lord's gracious dominion over His creation and especially over His beloved family.

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Worship service each Sunday
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10:30 A. M.
Pastor