

## The Truth about Sovereignty

### Introduction:

1. When bad things happen, many times you hear Christians say things like, "God is in sovereign control," "Our sovereign God is still on the throne," "It's God's sovereign choice," "It must be His sovereign will."
2. These phrases are thrown around and are supposed to bring some measure of comfort to those who mourn and go through tragedy.
3. What does the Bible really teach about sovereignty? Let me shock you. The word "sovereign" and "sovereignty" are not in our King James Bible.
  - The NIV substitutes the word "sovereign" for the word "God" over 300 times. Instead of "Lord God" they use the term "sovereign Lord."
  - According to the Oxford English Dictionary the name "sovereign Lord" is one of 99 names the Muslims use for their God, Allah.
4. The word sovereign was introduced into the English language by the French-speaking sovereigns who governed England in the 12th century. It was originally a French word.
  - It was almost used exclusively to describe a mortal, political leader, not the transcendent, Almighty God.
  - "Webster's Online Dictionary" defines sovereignty as "supreme power over a body politic," again associating it with governmental authority.
5. The word eventually got introduced into theology in certain religious circles and owes its impetus to John Calvin. He was a Frenchman and would naturally use such a word.
  - The word "sovereign" encapsulates his French training for the priesthood, his denial of free will, and his teachings merging church and state.
6. In this lesson, we will answer from the Bible four important and pertinent questions regarding sovereignty. Tonight we will deal with the first question.

### First, is sovereignty a Biblical concept?

1. Just because the word is not in the Bible does not necessarily mean that it is not a Biblical concept (example: the words "trinity" and "rapture").
2. If the word "sovereign" means supreme power, then yes, God is sovereign. Very few would argue with the fact that God holds supreme power.
  - Jesus said in **Matthew 28:18**, *"All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."*
  - Yet it is said of the anti-Christ in **2 Thessalonians 2:9** that He is coming after the working of Satan with "all power."
  - So, obviously, Christ **holds** all power, but hasn't fully exercised it all as of yet.
3. So the question becomes, "How and when does God exercise His power?"
4. Jesus had the sovereign power to call legions of angels before His crucifixion, but He chose **not** to exercise His power.
5. Jesus said in **John 18:36**, *"My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should **not** be delivered to the Jews: but **now** is my kingdom not from hence."*

- Did Jesus have sovereign power that would have delivered Him from the Jews? Absolutely, but **at that time** He chose not to exercise it.
6. One day Christ **will** fight and exercise sovereign power over this earth. This is the meaning of the word "omnipotent" and "Almighty." With only one exception, these two words are used exclusively in the book of Revelation.
    - When Christ returns to this earth, **Revelation 11:17** says that Christ will **take to Him** His great power and reign. At this time Christ will take "sovereign control" of this earth. **cf. Revelation 19:6, 15, 21:22; 1 Timothy 6:14-16**
    - God's sovereignty over this earth will be **exercised** at His Second Coming. At this time, the anti-Christ and false prophet are thrown into the lake of fire (**Revelation 19:20**), and Satan is bound in the bottomless pit (**Revelation 20:1-2**).
    - At the present time, Satan **does** have power that he is exercising. **Acts 26:18; 1 Corinthians 15:23-24**
  7. We also discover in Revelation that God's power is controlled by His character and nature. 15:3, 16:7
  8. People who misunderstand God's sovereignty will sometimes say, "God can do whatever He wants to do. He is sovereign." This is a false notion.
  9. God cannot do anything that contradicts His nature and character. **Titus 1:2; James 1:13**
    - **Illustration:** the tragic killings at Virginia Tech. Someone may say, "We have to trust God's sovereign will and plan." This statement leaves you with the idea that God desired and willed that event to occur, that it was part of His "mysterious" plan.
    - This is impossible because it would contradict God's righteous character. Satan is a murderer; senseless, brutal murder is part of Satan's character (**John 8:44**). Then who do you think planned and instigated this event (the mastermind)? **Jeremiah 19:5** is extremely important to read. **cf. Jeremiah 32:35**
    - Can God bring good things **out of** this tragic event? Absolutely. God will freely dispense His grace to those in need who seek Him and turn to Him.
    - But we cannot make God ultimately responsible for the dastardly deeds of sinful man and Satan. They are out of the realm of His righteous nature and character.
  10. God's sovereignty is also controlled and limited by His Word. God has freely and voluntarily limited Himself this way. **Numbers 23:19**
  11. To summarize - while God is sovereign, there are things He cannot do because they contradict His character or His written Word.
  12. Sovereignty is a Biblical concept, but when there is an overemphasis of God's power to the neglect or diminishing of His other attributes (love, mercy, grace, justice, truth, holiness, etc.) you end up with false doctrine. God does not exercise His sovereignty in isolation of His other qualities.
    - When you place an over-emphasis on His sovereignty, you end up with a God who empowers and commissions wicked people to do sinful things that violate His righteous character and loving nature.

- Christian, be very careful how you throw around the word "sovereign." God is not up in heaven pushing buttons and pulling levers and making everything that happens happen. Do not lay at His feet the evil and wicked choices of mankind and Satan.