



*Transforming society through the
power of the Gospel*

Understanding the Sovereignty of God

A short explanation by Bruce Morris

I Introduction

Sovereignty: the quality or state of being sovereign, of having supreme power or authority.

There is a lot of confusion over God's sovereignty and how this relates to events on the earth. Some people say God controls every action and some say He's not involved at all. How we see God as acting on the earth is critical to how we will see His nature. If we are not confident in His absolute goodness towards us, we will not trust Him.

Let's look at some Bible verses to help us understand this.

II God owns everything, and He rules over all

Deuteronomy 10:14

14 Indeed heaven and the highest heavens belong to the Lord your God, also the earth with all that is in it.

Psalms 89:11

11 The heavens are Yours, the earth also is Yours; The world and all its fullness, You have founded them.

Psalms 24:1

1 The earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness, The world and those who dwell therein.

1 Chronicles 29:11 - 12

11 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. 12 Both riches and honor come from You, And You reign over all. In Your hand is power and might; In Your hand it is to make great And to give strength to all.

The verses above are clear that God owns everything and that He is the ruler over all.

Some people have taken this to mean that God is either controlling or allowing every event on the earth. If this is true then every murder, rape, theft, sickness, injury etc would occur either because God caused it or allowed it. How could a God that causes or allows these things, be called good? How could He be called the personification of love?

Many people stop here. Let's look further at the Bible to see what it says.

III God placed mankind to rule the earth

Genesis 1:26-28

26 Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." 27 So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. 28 Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

Dominion: the power or right of governing and controlling; sovereign authority

Subdue: to conquer and bring into subjection; to overpower by superior force; overcome.

We see here that God's original intent for mankind was to subdue and have dominion over the earth that He had created. God as the ruler and owner of the earth chose to delegate His right to rule to mankind. God's delegated authority over the earth, was without limits. Man had a total, unlimited mandate to rule. Asaph, the prophet and worship leader had a revelation of this authority to rule and even likened men to gods in Psalm 82:6!

Psalm 82:6

I said, "You are gods, And all of you are children of the Most High

Psalm 115:16

16 The heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord's; But the earth He has given to the children of men.

Psalm 115:16 seems to contradict the verses on God's ownership of the earth in section I, unless we understand the mandate given in Genesis 1:26-28. Mankind was appointed as stewards or under-kings to rule as God's representatives on the earth.

Hebrews 2:5-8

5 For He has not put the world to come, of which we speak, in subjection to angels. 6 But one testified in a certain place, saying: "What is man that You are mindful of him, Or the son of man that You take care of him? 7 You have made him a little lower than the angels; You have crowned him with glory and honor, And set him over the works of Your hands. 8 You have put all things in subjection under his feet." For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we do not yet see all things put under him.

We need to understand that when God gives something, He does not take it back. His Word is something He will not break. God even went as far as to place His Word above His very name, clearly binding Himself to be subject to His own Word!

Romans 11:29

29 For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

Psalm 138:2

2 I will worship toward Your holy temple, And praise Your name For Your lovingkindness and Your truth; For You have magnified Your word above all Your name.

Psalm 89:34

My covenant I will not break, Nor alter the word that has gone out of My lips.

So how did things go wrong?

IV The devil fooled man into sin and stole his authority

Genesis 3:1-7

1 Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, "You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?" 2 And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; 3 but of the fruit

of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'" 4 Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. 5 For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." 6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. 7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.

The devil (serpent – Revelations 20:2) tempted Adam and Eve into disobeying God and obeying him. He did this by making them fear that God was holding out on them. They were already created in the image of God so how could God not want them to be like Him? Their foolishness caused them to disconnect from God as their source and authority and connect to the devil.

Romans 6:16

16 Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?

When they became the devil's slave by obeying him over God, the devil was able to steal the authority to rule the earth from Adam and Eve and use it to control and bring his evil into the world (John 12:31, John 16:11, 2 Corinthians 4:4). Adam and Eve empowered the devil on the earth, not God!

The question people ask is that why did God not step in to stop the devil taking over? God had given total authority to Adam and Eve. Their choices were a part of that delegation of authority. For God to override the results of their choices would be for Him to go back on His Word. He gave His Word that they were in control, this meant that their choices and the results of those choices had to stand.

The result of Adam and Eve's choice was that the earth was cursed, and they were driven out of the garden of Eden.

Genesis 3:17-24

17 Then to Adam He said, "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it': "Cursed is the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat of it All the days of your life. 18 Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, And you shall eat the herb of the field. 19 In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread Till you return to the ground, For out of it you were taken; For dust you are, And to dust you shall return." 20 And Adam called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living. 21 Also for Adam and his wife the Lord God made tunics of skin, and clothed them. 22 Then the Lord God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever"— 23 therefore the Lord God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken. 24 So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.

Because the devil was now exercising rule over the earth, every evil thing we see today was released into the earth. This is because the devil can only steal, kill and destroy, it's his nature.

John 10:10 [brackets added]

10 The thief [devil] does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.

God is not the one causing all the evil in the earth, the devil is!

V Jesus defeated the devil and took back the authority to rule the earth

Jesus was God's good plan to undo the devil's evil one. God immediately after Adam and Eve's sin, revealed His plan to save mankind (This plan works while still honouring His Word completely).

Genesis 3:15

15 And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel."

Here God speaks to the devil and tells him that the seed of the woman will crush his head. Woman don't have seed, men do. God was speaking of the virgin birth of Jesus. Jesus would crush the devil's head (defeat him totally) and in the process bruise His heel (temporary suffering at crucifixion).

Isaiah 7:14

14 Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.

Revelations 13:8

8 All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

Jesus came into the world to destroy the works of the devil.

1 John 3:8

8 He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.

Have you ever wondered why Jesus (Himself God) had to come to the earth as a man to fix things? Why not just wave His hands from heaven and have everything fixed in a moment of time?

Remember that God does not go back on His Word. He had given the earth to men to rule, which meant that if He interfered directly as God, He would be breaking that declaration. God the Son, entered the body of a human being to have legal right to make changes on the earth.

As a man, Jesus resisted the temptations of the devil and then defeated the devil on the cross, taking all the sins of the world upon Himself, He neutralised that sin and broke the power of the devil over mankind. He took back the authority that the devil stole and all who believe in Jesus, can walk in His victory and exercise the authority to rule the earth that He took back.

Hebrews 2:14-15

14 Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, 15 and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

Colossians 2:14-15

14 having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. 15 Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.

Matthew 28:18-20

18 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the

Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.

VI All those that believe Jesus and are in Him, receive the authority to rule

Jesus has won back all power and authority.

Philippians 2:5-11

5 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, 7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. 9 Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, 11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Colossians 2:8-10

8 Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. 9 For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; 10 and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.

1 Peter 3:21-22

There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, 22 who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him.

There can be no doubt that Jesus won back the power and authority over the earth that Adam and Eve lost to the devil. Let's see further what is said about those that believe in Jesus.

John 15:4-5

4 Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. 5 "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.

Mark 16:17-18

17 And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; 18 they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."

John 14:12

12 "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father.

Romans 8:16-17

16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.

Matthew 7:7-8

7 "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

VII Why does a defeated devil seem to still be powerful on the earth today?

Jesus defeated the devil on the cross and stripped him of all power and authority. The devil has been judged and his final incarceration in hell is sure. The sentence has however not been carried out yet... The reason? God's mercy!

Let's look at the parable of the wheat and tares.

Matthew 13:24-30

24 Another parable He put forth to them, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; 25 but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. 26 But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. 27 So the servants of the owner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?' 28 He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' The servants said to him, 'Do you want us then to go and gather them up?' 29 But he said, 'No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. 30 Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn."'"

If God had finished everything up as soon as Jesus rose from the dead, then only a few thousand people in the land of Israel would have heard the Gospel and had a chance to be saved. God in His mercy is delaying the end so that the message can get out to everyone.

Matthew 24:14

And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.

A side effect of this is that the devil while stripped of all stolen power and authority, can still move around the earth and tell lies. When men believe the devil's lies and act on them, he is able to influence events on the earth. He is a great liar and while men turn from truth to lies, the devil will exercise power that way.

John 8:44

44 You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.

Ephesians 6:11-13

11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

As believers we are not to listen to the lies of the devil but are to resist Him. Because the devil will always flee from someone operating in the authority of Christ.

James 4:7

7 Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

1 Peter 5:8-9

8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. 9 Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.

God never asks us to do something that He hasn't empowered us to do. When He says resist the devil, it's because we can.

N.B: The reason the devil gets away with so much on the earth today is that Christians are not using the authority God gave them to come against his evil works in the name of Jesus. Remember God placed man to rule on the earth, we are God's partner to ensure that His will gets done!

Jesus taught us to pray:

Matthew 6:10

Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven.

Nothing is written on the Bible by accident or to enable us to pray nice poetic prayers. The reason is that if we don't pray and use our authority as rulers on the earth to release God's will, it can't be released. For God to bypass mankind to enforce His will, would be to go back on His Word, where He placed men as rulers over the earth.

God's not letting bad things happen on the earth, we are!

e.g: Look in *2 Timothy 1:1-7* where it is clear that God's will is that everyone receive Jesus and be saved. Why then do we see verses telling us many will not be saved? (*Matthew 7:22-23, Luke 13:23-24*)? If God's will was automatically done on the earth, all would be saved! Many are not saved because we have free will and God needs men to release His will by faith on the earth, using our authority in Christ!