

Notes on the Sovereignty of God

Context

The current coronavirus worldwide pandemic.

How do we understand what is happening and God's role. Is it:

- A natural phenomenon
- A satanic attack
- A judgement sent by God
- Allowed by God by the removal of His protection
- A sign of the end times
- The result of the fall?

Or none of these!

Some church leaders believe that considering it divine judgement is 'crude and fundamentally opposes the character of God.'

However, if we take this line it collides with the Biblical understanding of the sovereignty of God. Scriptures make clear He is sovereign over the whole earth and the heavens:

- Rev.21:6
- Collos. 1:16
- Romans 11:36
- Jer.32:17
- Psalm103:19
- The book of Job!

He is Lord of all by the incontestable right as the creator ,owner and possessor of heaven and earth. Nothing happens outside His will including the things we like and the things we don't like!

How do we reconcile His love and his judgement?

Greek thinking that struggles with ambiguity and tension would have love and judgement at opposite ends of the spectrum. Faced with an apparent paradox most Christians opt for God being a God of love not judgement. But scripture says He is both things – at the same time! Judgement verses include:

- 2 Peter 2:4
- Isaiah 26:9
- Romans 2:1-5
- Psalms 9:8, 96:13, 98:9

The Hebrew mind lives with ambiguity and paradox. They view love and judgement not as opposites but as two sides of the same coin. God loves us so much He will send judgements or allow judgments to save us. His judgements are always redemptive and designed to lead us to repentance. His judgements are always righteous. Jesus speaks to Him as Father and us as the Children of God. What parent does not discipline their child to prevent them from harming themselves and making bad decisions? We even get angry when they ignore our rules that are meant to keep them safe. We discipline our children because we love them unconditionally. So does our Heavenly Father! Our response is sometimes ‘

It's not fair! But Ezekiel 33:17 tells us ‘ Yet the people say the way of the Lord is not fair. But is it their way which is not fair!’ Who are we to criticise the judgements of Almighty and sovereign God. ‘Gen. 18:25 says ‘Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?’

A Holy God has to judge sin because it corrupts the creation and destroys his relationship with us. And we know what kindles His righteous anger:

- Disobedience
- Seeking to harm Israel
- Sin – worshipping other God's, sexual and moral sin, injustice
- Destroying life
- For a full list see 10 commandments! Still in place according to Jesus.

He judges individuals but He also judges nations. His judgements on Israel were particularly harsh. They had been chosen and given the directions for holy living, they were to be a light to the nations but they repeatedly fell short and the righteous judgement of God came into play: death, disease, slavery and banishment. But He always warned them first through His prophets. And always He reminded them that His anger and judgements would lead to forgiveness and redemption because He loved them and had made an eternal covenant with them.

- Deut 30:15-20
- Habb. 1:5-7
- Amos 9:11-15

We are reminded in Ezekiel 33:11 that God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked. Indeed his punishment of His chosen people was because He loves them. Why then should the church and the nations not be judged - whom He also loves?

We see from scripture that God judged Israel as a nation and that He judged to behaviour of individuals and it is certain from scripture that individuals will face a final reckoning at the end of time.

- 2 Corin. 5:10
- Acts 17:31
- Matt. 12:36
- Romans 2:16
- Rev. 20:11-15

Does God judge us in the meantime?

Only those found in the Lamb's Book of Life will be saved and found not guilty. But what of the judgement of the church and the nations. This is not an end times judgement but is ongoing to lead to repentance. The nations have turned their backs on God and rules for Holy living and much of the church is mired in compromise. Another word for sin is compromise! Why should our sovereign God not use natural disasters and God ordained events to turn us back to Him?

So how does He warn us? By using prophecy. Biblical prophecy is like a stone cast into a pool. It has a point in time of fulfilment but ripples spread out and impact different people at different times. Could we be experiencing a ripple from Jesus end times prophecy about the pestilences coming on the earth? Not the Great Tribulation but a warning ripple of what is to come? In 1 Corin 10:8 and 10:10 we see the warnings from Paul about not natural acts but judgements from God if we don't listen to Him.

But we are already seeing the redemptive purposes of God in the current pandemic.

- We are being given time to reflect and wait on God, to re-examine our priorities
- The gospel is going out to unprecedented numbers of people by digital communication
- We are being the opportunity to be salt and light in our communities
- The environment is being given the opportunity to recover from the effects of human exploitation
- God has people's attention

- The kingdom is expanding as people commit to Jesus.

But the church needs to take seriously the challenges of compromise with prevailing orthodoxies of post Christian society:

- Abortion
- Sexual sin
- Destruction of god's creation
- Worshipping idols including money
- The marring of the image of God through the assault on gender

These can be redemptive but we need to work with our sovereign God to activate and release that redemptive power. We need to trust in our sovereign God and our heavenly Father.

Shalom

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