

WEEK 1

Government—It's Everywhere You Want to Be

INTRODUCTION

Government is everywhere. Consider your home for a minute. Every aspect of it was influenced by standards established by government.

Zoning regulations determined where your home could be built.

Permits allowed the builders to break ground.

Codes states determined how your home could be built.

Contract requirements oversaw the buying and selling of your home.

Tax credits may have helped you purchase your home.

Virtually every aspect of your life is influenced by government. The Federal Communications Commission sets regulations for radio, cable and satellite television, and your cell phone. The Department of Agriculture regulates most things you eat, the Food and Drug Administration inspects how food is packaged, and the Environmental Protection Agency works to ensure you have a clean water supply.

Government is involved in so many aspects of life, and what one person considers necessary another considers waste.

QUESTION: What do you believe is the purpose of civil government?

QUESTION: Many people believe our government does too much, meddles, or has grown too large. Do you generally agree? If so, why?

I. Government: _____

What is the proper role of government? We need to go back to the beginning to understand God's authority and the authority He gave to man. Genesis introduces a simple government in the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve did not have a Constitution or a Capitol, but the first government did have a king and a structure of authority.

First, we see _____. God not only tells things what to do, He tells them what to be and they are (Gen 1). God commands things to exist. He creates, and He reigns as king over every created thing (Psa 93).

The sixth day of creation brings us to mankind. God did not create another beast or a special kind of animal, but the image of Himself.

“Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”

— *Genesis 1:26-27*

QUESTION: Genesis 1:26-27 refers to God, mankind, fish, birds, livestock, insects, and the earth. What is the structure of authority between these? A diagram may help.

God created men and women as _____. As a result of being God's image, they had the ability to “take dominion” of creation. Adam would lead, and Eve would complement that the two would bring more glory to God on the earth together than apart.

Wrapped up in the concept of government is the meaning of “take dominion.”

It only means _____. As a result of being God's image, men and women have an ability that the animals do not. We can govern, and we have never ceased to govern creation since the very beginning.

Perfect harmony and order existed in Eden. God the King established Adam and Eve to represent Him. With the exception of one law, all was at the discretion of mankind to manage and to enjoy.

“And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, ‘You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.’”

— *Genesis 2:16-17*

Man disobeyed God by violating the only law in all the earth. Some of the changes to notice...

- Animals would no longer _____ but would fear man (Gen 9:2)
- Wives would no longer want to _____ to their husbands (Gen. 3:16).
- The ground would no longer _____ to man’s effort (Gen 3:18).

QUESTION: The land, the sea, and the animals have always needed oversight, but how would man as a sinner try to govern creation? How would creation respond?

A principle that the first chapters of Genesis teach is that all authority comes from God. Man was given the right to benevolently rule creation, to manage it in God’s stead. Yet, after the fall, man no longer desired to govern in ways pleasing to God, nor was it enough to govern creation. Starting with Cain, men began to take matters into their own hands and rule over one another.

II. Government: _____

Genesis 4 records advances in music, metallurgy, and animal husbandry. Man progresses in areas of technology and art, and yet, his descent is overwhelming. No progress is made to restrain the wickedness of the sinner’s heart.

Cain committed the world's first murder and then named a city after himself (Gen 4:8, 17). Scholars have noted that naming implies _____. In other words, Cain killed and declared himself ruler over a people.

““ *People do not create authority. Only God can do that.*

— Abraham Kuyper

Worse than Cain was his descendant, Lamech. Lamech exulted in murder, took for himself a second wife, and taunted God's vengeance (Gen. 4:23-24). According to Derek Kidner, Lamech marks the beginning of _____ over others.

“The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”

— *Genesis 6:5*

QUESTION: Were the actions of Cain and Lamech isolated events or characteristic of humanity everywhere? What institution had failed to deal with these crimes?

The Lord intervened to punish Cain and then to flood the earth, but between these events He left man to his own devices. Government structures of some kind existed as cities developed and men ruled over other men. Might made right as man, the image of God, refused to manage the earth in righteous ways. Thus, the world plunged into violence (Gen 6:11), and the Lord responded with judgment (Gen 6:7).

Genesis 9 brings us to a new beginning. Much would remain the same, but the most significant shift is that God now gave man _____.

“And for your lifeblood I will require a reckoning: from every beast I will require it and from man. From his fellow man I will require a reckoning for the life of man. Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image.”

— *Genesis 9:5-6*

THE AUTHORITY OF GOVERNMENT

<u>Prior to the Flood</u>	<u>After the Flood</u>
1)	1)
	2)

Genesis 9:6 assumes an authority structure, and in this verse, God gives this structure the authority to restrain sin. Men ruling other men to hold back violence is a far cry from the glory and beauty of Genesis 1.

QUESTION: Consider the Illinois Department of Natural Resources or the Environmental Protection Agency: How are these legitimate exercises of the authority God has given to government? How might these examples abuse their authority?

“ *A capitalist society requires certain preconditions. Among other things, it must establish a rule of law through enforceable contracts; respect private property; create a trustworthy bureaucracy to arbitrate legal disputes; and offer patents and other protections to promote invention.*

— Ron Chernow

KEY PRINCIPLES

- God ordained government to manage creation and to provide order by restraining evil. Without anything to restrain sin, wickedness would engulf the world (as in Noah’s time).
- Government has authority to act within its God-given sphere, and it is also accountable to God for how it acts. God is the source of all authority.
- God, in His goodness, has established government. Government is not a necessary evil but a precondition for prosperity and peace in a fallen world. No government is perfect, but even the worst is a step above the chaos of anarchy.