



"If we will not be governed by God, then we must be governed by tyrants."

—William Penn

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Whence Comes Leadership?

As the Western world continues to reel and lurch, tossed about by strong and conflicting forces, one cannot be in a conversation long before the well-worn topics of leadership and government arise. The man at the helm—whether local, national, or global—is continually watched, praised, and pilloried, depending on our individual evaluation of what he does relative to what we would do in his stead. [Love](#) it or loathe it, our leadership—those men or bodies of men who greatly influence what course our life will take—is constantly in our purview.

Conversations about leadership, though, are similar to observations about the weather. As the old adage has it, "Everybody *talks* about it, but nobody *does* anything about it." However, while this is certainly true of the latter, something *might* be able to be done about leadership—but not in the way that carnal man assumes. That is, human nature is inherently inclined to mutiny, yet Proverbs tells us that this is not the answer: "My son, fear the LORD and the king; do not associate with those *given to change*" ([Proverbs 24: 21](#)), implying a change in leadership through rebellion. A change in our leaders through rebellion or coup is always going to bear bitter—if not fatal—fruit.

The reason for this is the same reason that something *might* be done about poor leadership: as Benjamin Franklin noted, " [God](#) governs in the affairs of men." Actually, Benjamin Franklin did not go nearly far enough. God is *sovereign* in the affairs of men. As such, He decides which men will be leaders in order for His will to be carried out. He likewise decides the *quality* of that leadership. Recall these verities:

- Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. ([Romans 13:1-2](#))
- This decision is by the decree of the watchers, and the sentence by the word of the holy ones, in order that the living may know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, gives it to whomever He will, and sets over it the lowest of men. ([Daniel 4:17](#))
- John answered and said, "A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven." ([John 3:27](#))
- The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes. ([Proverbs 21:1](#))
- [Jesus](#) answered, "You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above. . . ." ([John 19:11](#))

Truly, God is sovereign in the affairs of men, and the records of God deciding who leads, and in what manner he leads, are unmistakable. Did not Korah find out the hard way that God ordains who leads (Numbers 16)? Did not Pharaoh have his heart hardened and softened according to God's plan for His people (Exodus 8-14)?

It is evident that we cannot decide which human leader is over us—even in a democracy. That is clearly God's domain. However, we *can* beseech God for good leaders, and for good leadership. The real question, though, is whether we—as an individual or as a part of a larger group—are living in such a manner that will incline God to bless us with good leadership rather than curse us with leadership that will lead us astray.

Will God bless a nation with a godly leader, wise counselors, and discerning judges when that nation has turned its back on Him? No, God does not reward wickedness. Looking at the history of Israel in the book of Judges, only when Israel cried out to God *after* repenting of their idolatry and other sins did God bless them with a leader to deliver them from their present distress. This same God is still governing in the affairs of men.

This principle is by no means limited to nations, for this same effect can be seen in the church. After the death of Herbert W. Armstrong in 1986, a new leadership was ushered in—a leadership that succeeded in dismantling the corporate structure and obliterating the body of doctrines restored through him. Did God have a hand in who the successor would be? Did He know the character and inclinations of that successor? God would not be God if He did not. But the relevant question for us to consider now is this: Was this not the leadership we earned?

The [nations of Israel](#) and Judah are enduring increasingly tumultuous times, and no relief is in sight from the torrent of pressures and dangers. We might wish for godly leaders and hope that the various national elections would result in some [wisdom](#) at the top. But when looking out at the peoples of Israel and Judah, it seems apparent that wise and godly leaders would be at odds with the people they would be leading. Israel and Judah have the leaders they have earned. If anything is to be done about it, the change will begin with the individual—and perhaps God will bless us with leadership that will lead us rightly.

- David C. Grabbe

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[The Sovereignty of God \(Part One\)](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

Only from God's Word can we know who is really regulating the affairs on the earth and which truth to believe. The scriptures, substantiating God's

sovereignty, assure us that Israel's history was no accident, the church's succession of Israel was no accident, and our calling into the church was no accident. Even though God's thoughts are not [yet] our thoughts and His judgments unsearchable, we have the assurance that just because scary, inexplicable things happen in our lives, God is still sovereign; we must develop the childlike faith to trust in Him for the solution.

From the Archives: Featured Article

[For the Perfecting of the Saints](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

In the last few years, turmoil and confusion have run amok in the church of God. Many feel they were misled by individuals who taught them doctrines they later came to understand were untrue. Some have yielded to the tendency to become cynical and suspicious of nearly anyone who claims to be a teacher of God's Word. Why all the distrust? Do Christians need a church?

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