

The Sovereignty of God (Part 4)

In Administering Creation

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Quite recently a number of us were standing around after services talking about general events concerning the church and the times that we live in. Someone said that a certain personality had recently said that God was delaying the return of Jesus Christ because the church isn't ready. I think that this occurred when we were up there in the Baltimore/Washington area, and I gave a sermon that day on the Sovereignty of God, and so the subject was there in my mind, and it, I guess you might say, hit me. But that statement is not entirely correct. In fact it's fifty per cent wrong.

The part that is correct is: yes, the church is not ready. But that isn't holding God back, not one second from sending His Son to this earth. Now the thrust of this personality's statement was a threat—the people listening to him had better get with it because Christ would return *soon*, or *later*, and which it was going to be was going to depend on their spiritual state. So, if they had any concern for the state of the world—well they had better get on with it, or the burden would be on them because God's merciful patience was running out.

Now please don't think that I am pointing the finger of scorn at this man, because I am just as guilty as he. I have uttered statements very similar to this in the past, but with the Sovereignty of God subject on my mind so forcefully, I can see now that that threat cannot possibly be true—not at all. Consider this: Who can stay the hand of God? Who can turn Him from the successful conclusion of any purpose of His? Now Jesus stated in John 14 that He was going to prepare a place for us. Are we going to stop Him from preparing a place for us? Are we going to hold Him back from preparing us to sit in that place?

Now I mentioned in my last sermon that He has ways of getting us to yield, that He might mold and shape us into what He desires so that we will be ready when the time comes. God always has alternatives, and if we won't cooperate, He can replace us with somebody better, because we are, after all, the weak of this world, aren't we? There's every reason to be encouraged that He will use every means at His disposal to prepare and save those He has called into His purpose, right on time, because nobody stops Him from doing what He sets His mind to do. I think that the Bible gives us every indication that He has scheduled the appearance of Jesus Christ to take place at a certain time. I'm going to show you why I believe this is true.

Let's notice how the Bible indicates that God, like manufacturers and builders, sets a time for the completion of a project. Now ladies, you do this right in your home. There are certain things that you have to accomplish by a certain time, and so you kind of set yourself a schedule and you set your pace to accomplish that so that when that time comes, you're done.

There's nothing strange about deadlines. Everybody's doing it almost every day, and builders of huge projects set a deadline. Just this week in Charlotte there was a front-page article about a certain highway reconstruction job that is going to be done about one month ahead of schedule.

That's good news for all the motorists.

So you see, the important thing, at least in terms of this sermon, is that the contractors and the city got together and set a schedule, and they said that the reconstruction job has to be done by June 15th, or whatever it is, but it looks like it's going to be done by May 15. So the company is going to earn a bonus. Now I propose to you that God too, works against deadlines that He sets. Here in Genesis 17 and in verse 20 it says:

Genesis 17:20-21 And as for Ishmael, I have heard you: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation. But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto you at this set time in the next year.

There's a deadline—"at this set time." Now maybe Abraham and Sarah didn't know exactly when that would be, but God did. Maybe He did reveal it to them, but I don't think He did. But it was set in God's mind when that time would be.

Genesis 21:1-2 And the LORD visited Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did unto Sarah as he had spoken. For Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him.

Right on time! I wouldn't be afraid to bet that it was right on the day that God had in His mind that this would occur.

Psalms 69:13 But as for me, my prayer is unto you, O LORD, in an acceptable time: O God, in the multitude of your mercy hear me, in the truth of your salvation.

What David is appealing to God to do is to set a time for answering. Now again, if I were a betting man, I would bet that God had already set the time that He was going to respond. But of course, being human, we don't know what that time is, and yet David knew enough to appeal to God to set a time so that he would at least have the comfort of knowing that he had requested it, and in all likelihood God would do it. But God had probably already done it.

Psalms 102:11-13 My days are like a shadow that declines; and I am withered like grass. But you, O LORD, shall endure forever; and your remembrance unto all generations. You shall arise, and have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favor her, yea, the set time, is come.

Do you think the Psalmist didn't know something? "The set time has come." A very interesting proposition here. It has very much to do with God's sovereignty. Is God running the

show, or isn't He? Can we hold Him back under any circumstance at all? Absolutely not. If God has a deadline for the return of Jesus Christ, it's going to come off exactly when He has scheduled it.

Psalm 105:16-19 Moreover he called for a famine upon the land: he broke the whole staff of bread. He sent a man before them, even Joseph, who was sold for a servant: Whose feet they hurt with fetters: he was laid in iron: Until the time that his word came: the word of the LORD tried him.

Until his time came.

Joseph's release from prison came exactly when God set it. I think that I have shown you (in past messages) that Joseph was very likely released from his prison on the Feast of Trumpets.

Now there is no doubt that God was already working in and through Joseph by the time that he was a lad of 17; but between the age of 17 and 30, Joseph's life was a veritable roller coaster. He went from the top of the family to the bottom—in the pits as a slave. And then back up to the top, you might say, as the servant, the slave of one of the greatest men of the kingdom. Back down to the bottom when he was falsely accused, and into jail.

Then, back up to the top once again. But you have to remember Joseph didn't know all of the details that were going on. I am sure that he had a pretty good idea that God was working in his life, if only from the dreams that were given to him, but I think that God was working through him even before that—before those dreams he had when he was still a teenager.

Joseph had a type of knowledge of God way far and above those of his brothers, and maybe up to that of even of his father, even by the time that he was a very young man. All through that ordeal of 13 years he had to trust God in prosperity, or in slavery, until that time came that God set him free and put him back on the top again.

Now the same principle is true in relation to Abraham's and Sarah's 25-year wait for Isaac. God set the time. He didn't let them know exactly when it would be, until finally He said "next year," so they knew it was getting close. They probably didn't know the day and they had to use their trust in Him until that time came that God had set.

Now, it's my hope in going through this that you won't lose your trust in God, even in your trials. You have to understand that if you appeal to God, it's very likely that He sets a deadline for the end of that trial and what He is going to accomplish by then.

Matthew 24:36 But of that day and hour knows no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.

Do you see that brethren? He has already set it right down to the hour! He already knows it! No plan of God is going to be held up by some puny man or some puny group of men who aren't prepared for it. It's going to come off in spite of us. The encouraging thing is that God will work to get us ready. I hope that you are encouraged by that. Now, God has set a deadline

then that He is working toward. We ought to be able to relate to deadlines because it seems as though we are very frequently being put into a position to be working toward one—a time when something has to be done. So in this case, God has set one for Himself.

Back in the Old Testament again, this time (still continuing the same theme) in Exodus the 6th chapter. God says to Moses:

Exodus 6:6-8 Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I am the LORD, and [notice this] I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments: And I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God: and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, which brings you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. And I will bring you in unto the land, concerning the which I did swear to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it you for an heritage: I am the LORD.

"Who's going to stop Me?" is what He is saying. "You puny two and one-half million recalcitrant—stubborn, stiff-necked—Israelites aren't going to stop Me from doing what I want to do (I added that, of course, but that's the sense.)." He gave it in a very encouraging and positive way. Oh brethren! If God's going to save you, nobody can stop Him! Why make it hard on yourself? Why not just yield, rather than force Him to use more stringent measures to get us to submit?

Oh boy! Let's notice something here. To me this is fantastic.

Genesis 15:12-19 And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him. And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that your seed shall be a stranger [notice this promise, this prophecy] in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; [We're talking ultimately about Egypt] And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance, And you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full. And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces. In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto your seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates: The Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites.

I don't think we need to read any further. That's far enough there. So God made a covenant

with Abram, and I want you to notice two things here. In verse 12, "And when the sun was going down..." And then verse 17, " And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp..."

Okay now, brethren, when did Israel leave Egypt? They went out of Egypt when the sun went down! Exactly 430 years to the day after the covenant was made! We were discussing this yesterday and Richard said that knowing God, they probably went out of Egypt right at the very second to 430 years. We'll be conservative and say it was right to the minute. I don't know. Nobody holds God back from what He wants to do. He says in Isaiah, "My counsel shall stand." This is why the prophecies ring with such a positive assurance. No puny man or angel, or mighty army of angels, or all the nations of men can stop Him from acting on what He purposes to do. Really brethren, under the best of circumstances, we're saved in spite of ourselves anyway.

Look at the saving of Lot from Sodom. The angels had to grab him by the hand and virtually drive him out of Sodom, and it's very likely that Lot was saved as a favor to Abraham—as a blessing to him just as much as it was a blessing to Lot and his family. But you see brethren, bringing Lot and his family out, God did through the angel. If we say that the church is holding God up, that is impugning the sovereignty of God. It's telling Him that He cannot finish what He starts, by the deadline that He has set. God does not lie, and His word through His Son says that the day and the hour are known already—two thousand years ago. I would not have one iota of a problem of believing that God had it already set when He breathed the breath of life into Adam—that He had already set the deadline and began His work toward it. Now He has set His will to save us, that we might be in His kingdom. Let's look at a familiar scripture back here in Revelation the 19th chapter, in verse 7 where John wrote:

Revelation 19:7 Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, [notice how positive this is] and his wife has made herself ready.

Is she ready for the return of Christ? You'd better believe it! She will be ready. Now what this verse tells me is that the church yielded to God in order to be ready exactly when God was ready. What it doesn't say is how painful it was for her to get ready. Everybody who has ever married—anybody who has ever prepared for a wedding—knows that preparation for a wedding is stressful.

There are all kinds of arrangements that must be completed. But brethren, God will not have to wait on her, because He will already have worked within her to make her ready when He is ready. Now it may be very painful for some because He's going to apply the pressure to get us to yield, to be a witness for Him, to be conformed to His image, to prepare us for the position—the place that He wants us to fill in His family. What He is appealing to us for now is to yield to Him, to make it easy on ourselves—to make it as easy as possible by yielding ourselves to Him.

The sovereignty of God is one of those issues that we take for granted once we are satisfied that

God exists and that He is working in our lives, at least to some degree. But the major purpose of this series is to see how deeply and how actively that He is involved. He is not giving us "a once over lightly." That's not the way God does things. He works toward perfection at all times. His involvement is not casual in any operation of His creation including His involvement in each of us, personally and individually. Now I know that we are all aware of how we humans can literally lose ourselves in our work by devoting all our time and energy to it, whatever it happens to be, to the exclusion of everything else.

We have a "buzz word" today for that. We say that such people are "focused." I wonder how many marriages have been ruined because somebody was "focused." Now God, unlike a man, would never lose Himself in His work to the exclusion of everything else that He is doing, because His perfection would prohibit such a thing. So you see, man's ability to focus—man's ability to be single-minded—has its pattern set in God. Now, what does He say about the church?

He says that it is the "apple of His eye." Do you ever look into somebody's eyes? What do you see? You see a reflection of yourself, or you see a reflection of what the eye is focused on. If we would look into God's eyes, what would we see? Ourselves! The Bible is telling us in its own inimitable way—by calling us the "apple of His eye"—that He is focused on us! Now don't be afraid of that. It's for our good. We don't wander away from Him at any time; but always we are the object of His affection.

The last time I spoke we just began a section of how God expressed Himself with great diversity in both the animate (the living) and the inanimate (non-living) elements of creation. Because we are so attuned to law, it's natural for us to be subtly persuaded to think that God made things, and then He stepped aside to let laws regulate everything that is going on in His creation.

So it's easy for us to see that God created all things in nature with great diversity and we can see that there are laws that we call "laws of nature" operating and keeping everything under control. But I have a question. Are they? Is it really necessary for God to actually, actively manage, or govern His creation? What about the things that are inanimate (that don't possess life)? Let's go back to a verse that we used (maybe in the last sermon)—I want to pick up a word.

Psalm 22:28 For the kingdom is the LORD'S: and he is the governor among the nations.

A governor manages. A governor controls. A governor directs according to his own purpose. Now considering this, did God then create and step away from what He had made and allow it to operate on its own, so that we would be subject to uniform, impersonal law rather than a sovereign God who is actively controlling the operations of His creation?

That might be a worthy concept, so that we could give it some extensive consideration, except for two very big factors, and both of these factors appear very early in the Bible—in fact, before we get very far into chapter 3 of Genesis. So turn back to the beginning there, and we'll show you one of these factors very quickly.

Genesis 1:26 And 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 fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.

Genesis 2:15 And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.

The very fact that God mentioned "dominion,"—dominion is governing—authority given for the purpose of managing. It is rulership. God gave man dominion over the earth, and He added to that a bit of detail in the dressing and keeping aspect. What that begins to show is that His creation is not going to operate uniformly to produce a never-ending source of life and beauty. He is telling mankind (you and me) that it is going to require managing and governing, and man is given the authority to do that. Now, let's go back to the book of Hebrews and add another piece to this.

Hebrews 1:10-12 And Thou, Lord, in the beginning have laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of your hands: They shall perish; but you remain; and they all shall wax [or grow] old as does a garment; And as a vesture shall you fold them up, and they shall be changed: but you are the same, and your years shall not fail.

Now here simply stated is part of the second law of thermodynamics. It is saying that the earth is running down. It is waxing old. Another way of saying it, is that there is a certain amount of entropy built into the system (i.e., the earth and its laws), which, if the earth is not taken care of through managing and dressing and keeping, this entropy will bring the creation to a state of disorganization; unlike evolution that says we are constantly getting higher, the Bible is saying that these uniform laws tend toward disorganization. The *Reader's Digest Dictionary* has a very interesting definition for entropy. Now listen to this.

"The irreversible tendency of a system, including the universe, toward increasing disorder and inertness."

Very simply stated, it is saying that the neglect of natural things is destructive.

Okay now. That's the one factor that shows that management—dominion and dressing and keeping—is required. We have only thought of it at this point in relation to man. Okay. The other factor is sin. Sin is introduced in the first 5 verses of Genesis the third chapter. What sin does is that it greatly exacerbates the problem of the second law of thermodynamics—of entropy. It speeds it up—post haste. It also increases very greatly the problem of governing, of managing, of controlling.

Now, if God requires a man to govern His creation within the extent of the powers that God gave to him, then it follows that God is overruling what man does so that it does not get completely out of control... furthering His own over-riding purpose—the spiritual purpose that

He is working out. The first question that must be considered is whether the creation needs to be managed by God, or governed by Him. I think the answer to that is an overwhelmingly, clear, resounding "yes." We'll show why in just a bit.

Though each law that God created works consistently within the framework of its influence, the conditions impacting on each law are not the same. Now why? Because man is managing the creation, and man is sinning while he is managing the creation. Man's management of the creation is not always very good. In fact, sometimes it is downright lousy—absolutely sinful—in what we do. So there are times brethren, that God has to step in and save us from ourselves, or we would wipe ourselves out through the manipulations of the nature that God has put to work here for us.

In fact there was one here in the *Charlotte Observer* this morning. Do you know what they announced on the front page of the *Charlotte Observer*? One of the things was that they are going to open the flood gates of Lake Powell, because they are finding that by regulating the water that goes through the Grand Canyon (the way that they have done since 1963) is destroying it. God never intended the Grand Canyon dam to be put in there.

But man, in his wisdom, decided to put a dam there and put that to water to work. When that water is put to work, we'd have all kinds of electricity. Well, we've got all kinds of electricity coming out of that dam, but it is destroying the Grand Canyon. Was that a good trade-off? You see, when man manages things, we don't think very far about the effects. So they decided to open the flood gates and let the water run out of Lake Powell, because they want to see (for a while) what is going to happen if they allow the water to rush through there once again, because the ecology of the Grand Canyon is being destroyed.

Do you remember the big floods in the Midwest? The Mississippi River overflowed, the Missouri River overflowed, all the rivers overflowing and overflowed these big dikes that we built. Do you know why we needed those big dikes? It was because businessmen wanted to live close to the river, to make transportation nice and cheap (they feel).

So they put dikes along the side, made the river real deep, kept dredging it out all the time, to get the mud off the bottom so that the paddle wheelers could go up with their barges and everybody would make a lot of money. Well, after (I don't know how many) years of this, now they're beginning to say that maybe they have made a mistake, saying that maybe they should have let the rivers overflow their banks the way they were intended. There was a very interesting result from that flood. Do you know what happened?

The next year, the farmers whose ground was flooded had record crops—all time best, because of all that goopy mud that the river put back on the ground, and the farmers were farming on river-bottom land. So they started scratching their heads, saying maybe they'd better let the river overflow its banks every year. Maybe there's something good (like God didn't know what He was doing) in God's design of the Mississippi River, the Missouri River, and so forth.

We mismanage things. So God then has to "tweak" things every once in a while to make up for our sins. Is God governing His creation? Will this thing work only because of uniform laws? Absolutely not! Now one of the simple proofs of this is that uniform laws will not act uniformly every year because every season is not the same. I'm not talking about spring, summer, winter,

fall being all the same and having the same weather all the time. I mean that every spring is not the same as the spring that was before it, or the spring that was after it.

Now, if the laws worked uniformly, every spring would be exactly the same, and every summer would be exactly the same, and every autumn would be the same, and every winter would be the same. But they aren't. Why? Because the conditions that create weather are not always the same, and so two weeks ago, in Charlotte, we had an all-time low for that day, and it managed to kill, in some cases, 90% of peach growers early crop. Sorry folks. Early peaches from South Carolina and from Georgia and from Alabama are going to be higher priced this year, because every spring isn't the same.

The trees got food, they put out their blossoms and a record cold came along and killed them off. You see, the weather has to be "tweaked." The uniform laws tend toward disorganization, and so the overall tendency is for nature to revert to a state of wildness. That is why, especially where mankind is living, that it must be managed. If it isn't managed well, mankind brings forces to work within the laws of nature that intensify certain laws effects, and it produces worse disasters than if man had left things alone.

Leviticus 18:24-25 Defile not you yourselves in any of these things:
for in all these the nations are defiled which I cast out before you.

Now what preceded this were a lot of laws that did not have to do with the land particularly, but had to do primarily with immorality: community immorality, social immorality, marriage immorality, unmarried immorality, bestiality, all kinds of immorality—you name it. So God says, Don't defile yourself with this sin, and...

Leviticus 18:25 The land is defiled: therefore I do visit the iniquity
thereof upon it, and the land itself vomits out her inhabitants.

Now what these two verses do is bring together two factors: Sin—mankind's sin, and God's sovereignty. Now because the earth requires dominion (i.e., management) and that dominion is first of all given to mankind. Mankind is part of nature. Man is a natural creature, and the rest of creation shares in the way that mankind lives, and when mankind sins, nature is going to react to some extent. Why? Because God reacts! That's what it says in verse 25.

God is overruling and managing things from His position on high. "And the land is defiled: therefore I do visit the iniquity thereof upon it, and the land itself vomits out her inhabitants." Now, what do you think God did? It's very easy to understand, that because of the sins of mankind, God "tweaks" the creation so that the land no longer brings forth its produce; the weather patterns change, they are altered; the rain doesn't fall; the area turns into a dustbowl; all kinds of bugs, insects—devourers, as the Bible calls them, spring up all over the place, and people can no longer live there because of their sin.

God has overruled man and kicked him right off the land. The way God puts it is as though the land is personified, as though it is a living, animate creature that violently rejects what is

happening on itself, and kicks the people out. Do you think that is beginning to happen here? Well I do. Now suppose that man is totally free. I mean that his free moral agency is taken to the nth degree, so he's totally free, and that it is impossible to compel or to coerce him without destroying or taking away this freedom—that he is entirely able to do as he pleases.

Now, if that is the case, then it follows brethren, that man is sovereign, not God—that man is totally the designer and architect of his destiny. Given man's history we can then (if it is true that man is totally free to do whatever he wants) we can have no assurance that morality will not gradually disappear and that anarchy and barbarism will not appear, with genocide not very far behind. Brethren, it is absolutely imperative that God be sovereign in order to govern the antics of the very creatures that He created. Now do you know that there is an example of this right in the Bible already—that it's recorded for you? What happened at the tower of Babel?

God stepped in and stopped them by confusing their tongues lest every imagination of their heart would be done. God overruled what they were doing, and you can be mighty glad that He did it, and He's overruling man all the time. He is governing His creation over and above mankind's dominion. If He was not doing that, we would have been wiped out long ago. Now man is not totally free. God has given man an awfully long leash, and very likely He has made the leash as long as He has in order to totally convince anybody (whoever lives at any time) that if God didn't govern His creation, including the inanimate aspects of it, there would be absolutely no hope.

Hebrews 1:3 Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.

Sometimes we might be misled to not give God His due, according to what this verse is saying. It might be that the word "upholding" just doesn't have the impact that it should, because the word kind of gives God an atlas configuration—like He's got the world sitting on His shoulder and He's upholding it there, just riding around. It might also give us the picture that God is some kind of a watchmaker who put his watch together, wound it all up, threw it out into space, and then walked away from it, and let it tick and work on its own.

Now *West's Amplified New Testament* translates that word "upholding" with the word "sustaining." That's a little bit better because it's a word that we're a little bit more familiar with, and so it gives us the impression of an ongoing operation.

Now the *Amplified Bible*, that most of you are so familiar with, catches the essence much better, because what they do is expand this word—they add these words: "maintaining, guiding, and propelling the universe." Let's feed that back in.

Hebrew 1:3 (Amplified) Who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and maintaining, guiding, and propelling the universe by the word of His power.

Now what we are looking at in this statement is the continuous minute by minute, year by year, century by century, ion upon ion, generation of the enormous, awesome, prodigious amount of power necessary to keep the creation going. The very stability of the creation "speaks" of His continuing of His involvement. The picture that is given here is if He stopped doing what He is doing, the creation would stop operating. I tell you, that just blows my mind!

Can you picture somebody with the stupendous amount of power just seemingly flowing out of His mind, second by second, every millisecond that goes by this power is flowing out of Him, keeping everything in operation—keeping you and me breathing. Oh! That is so mind-boggling it brings tears to my eyes to even think about it. Now brethren, God did not just create and walk away with everything operating according to impersonal law, as I will continue showing.

Genesis 1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

Genesis 1:3 And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.

This sets the pattern for the revelation of His governess. Now here we begin to see His sovereignty over the inanimate aspects of the creation. He speaks, and light appears.

Genesis 1:9 And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so.

He speaks. He governs the movement of water, and says, "*Water, I want you to go here, and land, I want you to rise up here.*" That's what a governor does. He manages what He made. Water seeks its own level, which then means that God designed that the water go into certain places. So we see God, right from the beginning, managing what He is creating. Here we come to the flood:

Genesis 6:17 And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and every thing that is in the earth shall die.

The flood was not a natural occurrence. He brought it. It just didn't come because uniform laws were working. God was responding to the sinfulness of man, and the whole earth was getting ready to "upchuck" everybody in it, except for Noah and his family—the most violent example of the reaction of the land to sin.

But the inanimate land and the laws that regulate weather and so forth—they were manipulated by the great God who was overruling everything. Does God govern the inanimate aspects of his creation? Oh yes, He does! Add to these things what the Bible says about His involvement in the plagues of Egypt.

Exodus 9:22-26 And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch forth your

hand toward heaven, that there may be hail in all the land of Egypt, upon man, and upon beast, and upon every herb of the field, throughout the land of Egypt. And Moses stretched forth his rod toward heaven: and the LORD sent thunder and hail, and the fire ran along upon the ground; and the LORD rained hail upon the land of Egypt. So there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, very grievous, such as there was none like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation. And the hail smote throughout all the land of Egypt all that was in the field, both man and beast; and the hail smote every herb of the field, and brake every tree of the field. Only in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel were, was there no hail.

So God exercised His authority. He "tweaked" the laws of His creation. Hail fell in one place, where the enemies of His purpose were, and the people He loved were not hit with one tiny little piece of ice. God governed.

Exodus 10:21-23 And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch out your hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, even darkness which may be felt. And Moses stretched forth his hand toward heaven; and there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days: They saw not one another, neither rose any from his place for three days: but all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings.

Boy! For you and me, that was a hard one! But somehow or other, God pulled a blind down. 'Pffft!' The land of Goshen had light; the land of Egypt had none. Boy! That was a good trick!

John 3:8 The wind blows where it lists [where it wants to], and you hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell whence it comes, and whither it goes: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.

One of the things that this verse is saying is that man has no power over the wind. Now man, or a whole group of men, cannot determine when, where, or how hard the wind will blow. Mankind has no control over the wind; but God does. The wind blows where God pleases.

Turn to Mark 4 and I want to show you one of the most astounding things that ever happened during Christ's lifetime. (To me, astounding, anyway.)

Mark 4:35-40 And the same day, when the even was come, he said unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side. And when they had sent away the multitude, they took him even as he was in the ship, And there were also with him other little ships. And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now

full. [It was filling up with water.] And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, care you not that we perish? And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. And he said unto them, Why are you so fearful? how is it that you have no faith? [Don't you know that you are the apple of the Creator's eye? Do you think He's going to let this boat sink?]

Christ was so calm, He was asleep. Now that man had faith! He knew Who controls the wind. He knew God was able to know how much water that ship could take and how much wind it would take to throw it over, or how big the waves would be before they would be thrown over, and that Jesus was the apple of His eye and nothing was going to happen until the time that God set.

Mark 4: 41 And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?

It was as if the wind and sea and the waves heard the voice of their Creator and they *immediately* obeyed Him when He spoke to them. He exercised His sovereignty. Man has no control over the wind. It goes wherever it wants; it blows as hard as it wants; it blows when and where it wants. But Jesus spoke—and it stopped dead in its tracks! And a word from Him, and a fig tree perishes.

When He touches somebody, disease flees away from that person. You can see, when He died for us, He gave man power to take His life, or it never would have happened. On His own, He laid it down. He told Pilate that he could not have done it unless it (the power) was given to him. Man saw God in the flesh—the sovereign Creator—and they killed Him when He permitted it. Now we'll look at one more thing before we close off for today.

Matthew 24:7 For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in different places.

Now, when did Jesus say this? Thirty-one A.D. How could Jesus say this unless God was going to use His power to purposely increase these things? Look at the earthquakes. How could Jesus say this was going to occur, unless He knew God was going to exercise His authority to cause earthquakes to increase, and not only increase, they were going to be occurring in areas that one does not normally associate with earthquakes? Nobody has ever shown—no geologist has ever shown that earthquakes occur according to some uniform series of events.

It's kind of interesting. Last year there were 192 earthquakes of magnitude 6 or better throughout the world. That is the highest total that the people who work with earthquakes had ever recorded in any year since they began recording the number that are occurring. As of March 9, according to a report that we have, there have already been 36 quakes over

magnitude 6, and 5 of them have been over magnitude 7. At this rate it figures out to be 164 over this year, or 1 earthquake every 54 hours of magnitude 6 or better occurring somewhere around the world.

The Creator, brethren, is at work. Everything is right on time, and if we yield to Him, we will be ready right on time, because nobody stops the sovereign Creator from doing what He wants to do, when He wants to do it. If He wills to do it, it's going to be done. You can bet your life on that. The reason that He wants us to understand is so that we will trust Him and allow Him to work with us in preparation for that time.