

GOD'S DESIGN FOR GOVERNMENT

CHURCH AMBASSADOR NETWORK
INITIATIVE OF THE FAMILY LEADER® FOUNDATION

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GOD INSTITUTED GOVERNMENT

Government is a gracious gift from God, given to a fallen world. It is an expression of common grace. When sin entered the world, God could have left humanity to its own consequences. Yet, in His loving kindness and desire for order, God gave us government. Government cannot save us, but it has brought order to a world plagued and ruled by sin. Man did not create government; God instituted it. And no government comes to power apart from His allowance.

"Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer."

ROMANS 13:1-4 (ESV)

"Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good."

1 PETER 2:13-14 (ESV)

THE PURPOSE OF GOVERNMENT

Government as an Institution of Justice

Government's primary purpose is justice. It has been established by God to punish those who do evil and to reward those who do good. God does not permit vigilante justice, but instead calls us to submit to our governing authorities. While no government will administer perfect justice in this life, we can take great comfort in knowing that Christ, the King of kings, will administer perfect justice.

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Government Created for Our Good

Government is a gift of common grace given to all of mankind. In a world disrupted by sin, God provided government to establish a measure of order and stability. Scripture teaches that government was created for our good, yet our posture toward it often reflects confusion about its role. When we clearly understand government as an institution created by God, we are able to see it for the blessing that it is. And when we fix our eyes on Christ as the perfect example of righteous leadership, we are not shaken by the failures of the human-run institution, but remain grounded in the faithfulness of the One who reigns over it.

"For he is God's servant for your good."
ROMANS 13:4 (ESV)

Government Officials are Servants of God

Not only is government a servant for our good, but because it is an institution established by God, those who serve within it are described by Scripture as His "ministers" or "servants"—terms that can also be understood as shepherds entrusted with the care of God's institution. This is true even of governing authorities who do not know Him. Romans 13, written during the reign of the Roman Caesars, reminds us that God's purposes are not hindered by the faithfulness—or unfaithfulness—of human rulers. Throughout history, God has used—and will continue to use—government leaders to accomplish His sovereign purposes.

"For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing."
ROMANS 13:6 (ESV)

Shepherds of Government

God created three institutions, and each has a shepherd to lead and watch over it: a father shepherds the family, a pastor shepherds the church, and historically, the king shepherds government. Throughout Scripture, we see God working through earthly rulers, including Pharaoh, Caesar, the king of Nineveh, the emperors of Persia and Babylon, the king of Sodom, the kings of Judah and Israel, and King Herod.

All of these individuals—whether considered "good" or "bad" kings by earthly standards—fell short of God's perfect standard. There is only one King in all of history who has reigned, and continues to reign, perfectly: Jesus Christ. Paul, aware of his own shortcomings as a shepherd of God's church, exhorted others, "Imitate me as I imitate Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1). Paul knew that only Christ is the perfect standard for leadership.

Jesus Christ — The Chief Shepherd

The same principle applies to government leaders. Even the greatest rulers in history fell short and desperately needed a Savior. Only Christ, the King of kings, rules perfectly, administering perfect justice. He is the Son of Man, heir of David, who did not come to be served—though He alone is worthy—but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many. As He is for the church, Jesus is also the Chief Shepherd of government. He is the one to whom we must ultimately point as the true example of leadership.

"For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

MARK 10:45 (ESV)

"He will display at the proper time—he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords"

1 TIMOTHY 6:15 (ESV)

"On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords."

REVELATION 19:16 (ESV)

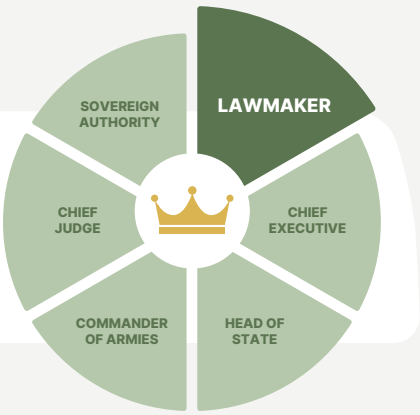
WHO IS THE KING TODAY IN THE UNITED STATES?

Kingly Authority Delegated Under God

Monarchy was the most common form of government in biblical times, which is why kings are described as the historic shepherds of government. While the structure has changed, every government still has a shepherd—or multiple shepherds—today.

God delegated six primary governing powers. In biblical times, these powers often rested in one individual. In modern systems, they are divided. To identify today's governing shepherds, we examine who holds these six powers. This civic exercise can be applied to any government in the world.

The Six Delegated Powers of the King in the American System



Lawmaker (Congress / State Legislatures)

The king served as the lawmaker of the nation, defining right and wrong, and setting the boundaries that lead toward life or death. Righteous laws guide people toward life and protect them from destruction. Jesus is our ultimate Lawgiver, whose laws are absolute and by which all will be judged. Today, this

authority rests with Congress and state legislatures, typically divided into two chambers.

"See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil."
DEUTERONOMY 30:15 (ESV)

"Sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good."
1 PETER 2:13-14 (ESV)

Chief Executive (President / Governor)

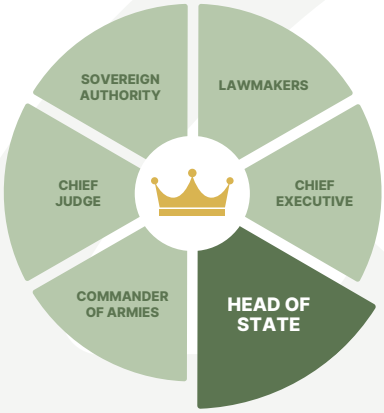


The king executed and enforced the laws and oversaw the daily functions of government. In Genesis, Pharaoh delegated this authority to Joseph. Most government employees serve within this branch. Jesus is the ultimate Chief Executive, for all authority rests upon His shoulders. Today, this responsibility rests with the President and state governors.

"Let Pharaoh proceed to appoint overseers over the land and take one-fifth of the produce of the land of Egypt during the seven plentiful years."
GENESIS 41:34 (ESV)

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."
MATTHEW 28:18 (ESV)

Head of State (President / Governor)



The head of state serves as the symbolic and moral example of the nation, a role with enduring influence. Scripture consistently records the character of Israel's kings, showing whether they walked in the ways of David or not. Jesus is our ultimate Head of State, calling us to follow His example. Today, this responsibility rests with the President and state governors.

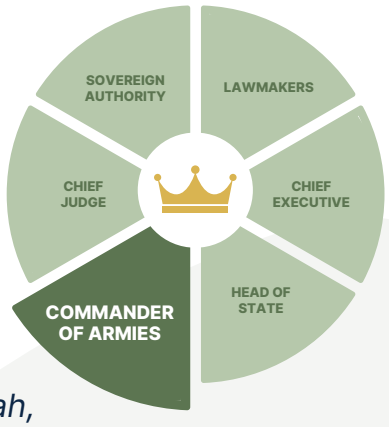
"The word reached the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes."
JONAH 3:6 (ESV)

"Shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. And when the

chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory."

1 PETER 5:2–4 (ESV)

Commander of Armies (President/Governor)



The king defended the people and laid down his life for them. David's failure in this role led to moral collapse. Jesus is our ultimate defender, defeating sin, death, and the powers of hell. Today, this authority rests with the President as Commander in Chief and with governors over their state guards.

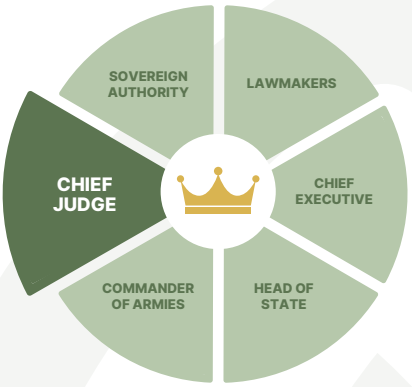
"And David sent out the army, one third under the command of Joab, one third under the command of Abishai the son of Zeruiah, Joab's brother, and one third under the command of Ittai the Gittite. And the king said to the men, "I myself will also go out with you."

2 SAMUEL 18:2 (ESV)

"And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses."

REVELATION 19:14 (ESV)

Chief Judge (U.S. / State Supreme Courts)



The king served as the final judicial authority. Solomon exemplified this role, and Paul even appealed directly to Caesar. This responsibility carries great weight. Jesus is the ultimate Judge, through whom perfect justice is fulfilled—both at the Cross and in the final judgment. Today, this authority rests with the U.S. Supreme Court and state supreme courts.

"If then I am a wrongdoer and have committed anything for which I deserve to die, I do not seek to escape death. But if there is nothing to their charges against me, no one can give me up to them. I appeal to Caesar."

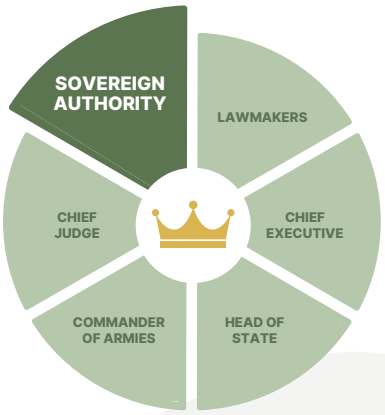
ACTS 25:11 (ESV)

"And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead."

ACTS 10:42 (ESV)

Sovereign Authority (The People)

The sovereign is the one in whom ultimate authority resides. Historically, kings "owned" government, though wise rulers understood their authority was delegated by God. Jesus is the true and ultimate Sovereign. In the United States, sovereignty rests with "We the People," who exercise this authority through elections.



"Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah."
EZRA 1:2 (ESV)

"For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together"
COLOSSIANS 1:16–17

"On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords."
REVELATION 19:16 (ESV)

OUR RESPONSE AS CHRISTIANS

Honor and Pray

God calls us to honor, pray for, and submit to those in authority—not because they have earned it, but because of the position they hold. If the early church could pray for, honor, and submit to Emperor Nero, how much more can we. Treating governing authorities as God has instructed is part of being a faithful witness in the world today.

"Fear God. Honor the emperor."
1 PETER 2:17 (ESV)

"First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way."
1 TIMOTHY 2:1–2 (ESV)

"Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.
ROMANS 13:1 (ESV)

Choose Well

When Christians vote, we are not merely selecting individuals to serve in a human institution. We are choosing servants to steward an institution established by God—one that carries real and lasting consequences for people's lives. History shows that righteous leaders can be a profound blessing.

We must choose men and women who are capable, God-fearing, and willing to serve their neighbors sacrificially—leaders who seek God as they craft laws that lead people toward life and protect them from death. While we should weigh the importance of each election, we must also hold fast to the truth that God is sovereign. True justice is found only in Christ. This balance allows us to take civic responsibility seriously without being ruled by fear, living instead as witnesses to a greater hope.

"Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you ***for a reason for the hope that is in you;*** *yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil."*

1 PETER 3:13-17 (ESV), EMPHASIS ADDED.

By honoring and praying for leaders, and by exercising our vote to choose righteous servants, we participate in God's design for government while pointing others to Christ, the ultimate King and Shepherd of all authority.