

Biblical Principles for Secession



Let's open our Bibles today, please, to the book of First Kings, chapter 12. First Kings, chapter 12. Let me say that I'm going to go over a few things you probably already know, but I'll say them not just for your benefit, but for the benefit of those who will hear the tape and may not know them.

So, First Kings, chapter 12, and let's begin reading with verse 1. The message is entitled: Biblical Principles for Secession.

“And Rehoboam went to Shechem: for all Israel were come to Shechem to make him king. And it came to pass, when Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who was yet in Egypt, heard of it (for he was fled from the presence of king Solomon, and Jeroboam dwelt in Egypt), that they sent and called him. And Jeroboam and all the congregation of Israel came and spake unto Rehoboam, saying, Thy father made our yoke grievous: now therefore make thou the grievous service of thy father, and his heavy yoke which he put upon us, lighter, and we will serve thee. And he said unto them, Depart yet for three days, then come again to me. And the people departed.”

“And king Rehoboam consulted with the old men, that stood before Solomon his father while he yet lived, and said, How do ye advise that I may answer this people? And they spake unto him, saying, If thou wilt be a servant unto this people this day, and wilt serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be thy servants for ever.”

“But he forsook the counsel of the old men, which they had given him, and consulted with the young men that were grown up with him, which stood before him. And he said unto them, What counsel give ye that we may answer this people, who have spoken to me, saying, Make the yoke which thy father did put upon us lighter? And the young men that were grown up with him spake unto him, saying, Thus shalt thou speak unto this people that spake unto thee, saying, Thy father made our yoke heavy, but make thou it lighter unto us; thus shalt thou say unto them, My little finger shall be thicker than my father’s loins. And now whereas my father did lade you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke: my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions.”

“So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam the third day, as the king had appointed, saying, Come to me again the third day. And the king answered the people roughly, and forsook the old men’s counsel that they gave him; and spake to them after the counsel of the young men, saying, My father made your yoke heavy, and I will add to your yoke: my father also chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions. Wherefore the king hearkened not unto the people; for the cause was from the Lord, that he might perform his saying, which the Lord spake by Ahijah the Shilonite unto Jeroboam the son of Nebat.”

“So when all Israel saw that the king hearkened not unto them, the people answered the king, saying, What portion have we in David? neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: to your tents, O Israel: now see to thine own house, David. So Israel departed unto their tents. But as for the children of Israel which dwelt in the cities of Judah, Rehoboam reigned over them. Then king Rehoboam sent Adoram, who was over the tribute; and all Israel stoned him with stones, that he died. Therefore king Rehoboam made speed to get him up to his chariot, to flee to Jerusalem. So Israel rebelled against the house of David unto this day.”

“And it came to pass, when all Israel heard that Jeroboam was come again, that they sent and called him unto the congregation and made him king over all Israel: there was none that followed the house of David, but the tribe of Judah only. And when Rehoboam was come to Jerusalem, he assembled all the house of Judah, with the tribe of Benjamin, ... chosen men, which were warriors, to

fight against the house of Israel, to bring the kingdom again to Rehoboam the son of Solomon. But the word of God came unto Shemaiah the man of God, saying, Speak unto Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, king of Judah, and unto all the house of Judah and Benjamin, and to the remnant of the people, saying, Thus saith the Lord, Ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren the children of Israel: return every man to his house; for this thing is from me. They hearkened therefore to the word of the Lord, and returned to depart, according to the word of the Lord.”

Biblical principles for secession. Some of you may or may not be aware, but there are numerous states in this country that are very seriously considering seceding. In fact, it has been talked about openly in the states of Hawaii, Alaska, Vermont, and Montana (and Texas, ed.). Northern California has wanted to secede from Southern California for years. There is even a confederation discussing that at this time. There have been numerous conferences throughout this land—at least four that I can think of—that have seriously entertained seceding from the United States.

Note: *Think about eastern Ukraine and the war that is going on now. Through this sermon talks about America, this same right of secession applies to any people, in any nation that is Christian. I don't care if their government is Communist or if their constitution states otherwise, it's a Christian's duty to follow God and His laws. Therefore, what the EU and the United States is doing is totally wrong.*

Now the question has to be asked: Should we go, or should we stay? Put another way: Is it time to consider leaving the Union of the States as it now exists and forming a new union or a new confederation of states? We could boil it down even further: Do we wish to stay under the regime of Washington, D.C., as it now is? Or further still: Do we wish to stay under the regime in many state capitals as they now are? Unhappily, many state capitals are just as wicked, corrupt, and perverse as Washington, D.C.

I don't know about you, but I don't want to be under Atlanta, Georgia, any more than I want to be under Washington, D.C. To me both are equally corrupt. Now, someone is going to say, “Why this talk about secession? Don't you know that the war settled that principle once and for all?” No—the war did not settle the principle of secession. Force never negates righteousness or a principle of truth. Just because a bully wins does not make the bully right.

You would not adopt that attitude if you were walking down the street and a man stepped around the corner. He's larger, stronger, and armed. He sticks a weapon between your eyes and says, “Give me all your money,” and he robs you of several thousand dollars. Thankfully, he leaves you your life. As he escapes, do you think to yourself, “Well, that's settled. The money's gone. I no longer need it or want it. It's over and done with. I don't have to call the law. I don't have to try to get my money back”? No. You would say, “What he's done is wicked and wrong. He may have been stronger and able to take it, but that does not make what he did right.”

So, simply because the North won a war does not mean they negated a historical, constitutional, or biblical principle. When we ask the question, “Should we go or should we stay?” there are many ways to approach the answer. One way is historical. I’ve done that before, and I’m not going to do it today. If you will listen to the message I preached, “Was Secession Treasonous?” I give many historical illustrations there concerning secession. History can give direction and guidance, but for the child of God, the question must be resolved on the basis of the Word of God.

Today I want to give you a biblical principle—or, rather, several principles—that lead to secession. The term secession is derived from the Latin *secessio* (from *secedere*), which literally means an act of withdrawal, which is what secession is. Secession is not revolution, nor is it anarchy. It is simply a withdrawal from one union or government in order that you might establish another union or another government.

Now, secession was understood even by many in the North who hated and despised the South. For instance, Horace Greeley, who was certainly no friend of the South and editor of the Republican New York Tribune, declared on February 23, 1861—after a confederacy had been formed by the seven Gulf (cotton) states—something to this effect: We have repeatedly said that the great principle embodied by Jefferson in the Declaration of Independence—that governments derive their powers from the consent of the governed—is sound and just, and that if the cotton states choose to form an independent nation, they have a clear moral right to do so. Whenever it shall become clear that the great body of Southern people have become conclusively alienated from the Union and anxious to escape from it, we will do our best to forward their views.

Listen to what Horace Greeley said: If the South wants to secede, let them go. It is their right.

In our text before us in First Kings, chapter 12, the ten northern tribes seceded from King Rehoboam. Rehoboam was the son of Solomon, who was the son of David. God had entered into a covenant with David and told him that as long as his sons obeyed Him, he would not want for a son to sit upon the throne of Israel.

Let me give you a quick overview of Rehoboam. This was written by Matthew Henry in his commentary, and I found it very interesting—what he said about King Rehoboam. Remember, Rehoboam is the son of Solomon, who was the son of David. Here’s the gist of what Matthew Henry wrote: Solomon had a thousand wives and concubines, yet we read only of one son to bear up his name—and he is a fool. It is said in Hosea 4:10, “they shall commit whoredom, and shall not increase.” Sin is a bad way of building up a family. Rehoboam was the son of the wisest of men, yet did not inherit his father’s wisdom; and then it stood him in little stead to inherit his father’s throne. Neither wisdom nor grace runs in the blood. Solomon came to the crown very young, yet he was then a wise man. Rehoboam came to the crown at forty years old—when men will be wise, if they ever will—yet he was then foolish. Wisdom does not go by age, nor is it the multitude of years, nor the advantage of education that secures it. Solomon’s court was a mart of wisdom and the rendezvous of learned men, and Rehoboam was the darling of the court, and yet all this was not

sufficient to make him a wise man. “The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong.” No dispute was made of Rehoboam’s succession upon the death of his father; he was immediately proclaimed king.

I find that very interesting. He’s pointing out how neither wisdom nor grace runs in the blood, and just because you’re the son of a wise man certainly does not make you wise. Rehoboam was indeed a lawful descendant of David, yet he had none of David’s godliness nor any of Solomon’s wisdom. He had been lawfully appointed to rule, but he had no inclination to rule lawfully. He had no intention of governing covenantally or constitutionally.

Remember this about Solomon: in his last days he fell into idolatry and tyranny. Incidentally, those two things always go together. It is impossible to be a tyrant and rule according to the Word of God. Tyrants are made when they forsake God and God’s law. If you rule biblically and lawfully, it is impossible to be a tyrant; but when you forsake God and His law, tyranny is always the result—because fallen man always wants to play God.

Lord Acton of England said, “There is no worse heresy than that the office sanctifies the holder of it.” The office does not make a man wise, or gracious, or sanctified in any way. Many times you will find a fool in office. William Pitt of England rose in the House of Lords to defend freedom of speech, and in part he said: “Unlimited power is apt to corrupt the minds of those who possess it; and this I know, my lords, that where law ends, there tyranny begins.” I can assure you that whenever one allows the law of God to be set aside, tyranny will be the result. You want to know what happened in this country—why we are where we are? Because we have allowed the law of God to be set aside.

When Rehoboam took over the kingdom, Israel wanted and needed relief from the excessive burdens that had been placed upon them during the last days of King Solomon. If you look in First Kings 12:4, Jeroboam had become the spokesman for Israel, and they spoke to Rehoboam:

“Thy father made our yoke grievous: now therefore make thou the grievous service of thy father, and his heavy yoke which he put upon us, lighter, and we will serve thee.”

Note: all they were asking was to lighten the grievous load that the father had put upon them. They were ready to stay. They were ready to work things out if Rehoboam would only listen, do what was right, and grant them relief.

Do you realize that this was exactly the position of our Founding Fathers? Our Founding Fathers did not initially want to be independent of England. Listen, if you would, to the Declaration of Independence: “That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most

likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.” Now listen: “Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shewn, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed.”

What did our Founding Fathers say? If we can just make things right, we are not willing to abolish the form of government we are used to. That is why the Fairfax Resolves were written in 1774—because our Founding Fathers at that time were beseeching George III to keep his end of the covenant. They were saying, “We’re willing to be your servants, but we’re not willing to be your slaves.”

So Israel, according to verse 4, was willing to suffer and to keep Rehoboam as their king as long as he would grant them relief and rule benevolently. In fact, they stated plainly in verse 4, “We will serve thee.” Their initial plan was to stay. They didn’t necessarily want to leave. Note: they did not ask the king to resign, withdraw, or violate the covenant. All they wanted the king to do was to rule covenantally—or constitutionally.

When they came to Rehoboam in verse 4 and essentially said, “Do what you’re supposed to do, and we’ll serve thee,” the only wise thing Rehoboam did in this entire situation was to ask for three days to consider their request:

“And he said unto them, Depart yet for three days, then come again to me. And the people departed.” (1 Kings 12:5)

He asked for three days so that he might consult and get counsel. Beginning with verse 6, he first asked counsel of the old men. Note that there is a difference between the counsel of old men and the counsel of young men—between the thinking of the mature and the thinking of the inexperienced. Have you ever noticed why the military always wants young men? Police departments often want young men. You’ll see why in just a moment.

“And king Rehoboam consulted with the old men, that stood before Solomon his father while he yet lived, and said, How do ye advise that I may answer this people? And they spake unto him, saying, If thou wilt be a servant unto this people this day, and wilt serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be thy servants for ever.” (1 Kings 12:6–7)

“But he forsook the counsel of the old men, which they had given him, and consulted with the young men that were grown up with him, which stood before him. And he said unto them, What counsel give ye that we may answer this people, who have spoken to me, saying, Make the yoke which thy father did put upon us lighter? And the young men ... spake unto him, saying, Thus shalt thou speak unto this people ... Thy father made our yoke heavy, but make thou it lighter unto us; thus shalt thou say unto them, My little finger shall be thicker than my father’s loins. And now whereas my father did

lade you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke: my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions.” (1 Kings 12:8–11)

Now, let me show you the difference between the counsel of the old men and the counsel of the young men. In verse 7, the old men told Rehoboam: “If thou wilt be a servant unto this people this day, and wilt serve them ... then they will be thy servants for ever.”

There’s something here you might not catch just reading the English. The word “servant” in verse 7—when they tell the king, “If you will be the servant of this people”—is the Hebrew word ‘ebed, which literally means a slave, a bondservant, a manservant. They were saying: “King, if you’re willing to be the servant of this people—if you’re willing to recognize that you reign not only by the decree of God but also by the consent of the governed—then, if you will be their servant, they will be your servants forever.”

In other words, there is reciprocity in covenantal obligations.

Here’s your text edited with corrected spelling/grammar and with clear paragraph breaks for readability:

So the king is covenantally obligated to be a slave or servant to the people. And as he serves them, in return they serve him.

Let me point out again—something I’ve said innumerable times—all government is covenantal in nature. I don’t care if you are talking about family government, church government, or civil government.

When David was made king of Israel, remember that David was chosen by God. But just because God chose David to be king did not mean that God threw him down in front of the people and said, “There he is, boys. He’s your king whether you like it or not.” No, no, no. Although David was chosen by God to be king, he was also chosen by the people.

In 1 Chronicles 11:3 we read: “Therefore came all the elders of Israel to the king to Hebron; and David made a covenant with them in Hebron before the LORD; and they anointed David king over Israel, according to the word of the LORD by Samuel.”

Notice, God chose David, but He confirmed that choice through the will and recognition of the people. And the people entered into a covenant with David. There was a kingly covenant—a kingly

constitution. It was true under David. It was true under Solomon. And it was true under Rehoboam as well.

Now let me ask a question: Why did God choose David? And why did God allow David to ascend to the throne? We could enlarge that question: Why does God allow anyone to have a position of authority?

Look at 2 Samuel 5:12: "And David perceived that the LORD had established him king over Israel, and that he had exalted his kingdom for his people Israel's sake."

Why did God establish David? Why did God exalt his kingdom? For His people's sake.

In other words, a true ruler does not rule for himself. He does not rule for his position, his program, or his party. He rules for the people over which God has placed him. A true ruler is always a servant.

We used to have in this country a phrase referring to our rulers: public servants. Try calling a bureaucrat that today, and he'll be visibly upset. No politician today thinks he is your servant. He thinks he is your master.

Now let me ask another question: If secession is biblical, lawful, and constitutional, what are the principles that lead to it?

Remember, the young men advised Rehoboam to answer the people this way: "My little finger will be thicker than my father's loins." What was he saying? He meant: I'm going to be tougher, rougher, crueler, and meaner than you can dream of. My father beat you with whips; I'll beat you with scorpions. My father made your yoke heavy; I will make it heavier. I will add to your burdens.

I told you earlier there is a difference between the thinking of old men and young men. Old men usually think biblically; they think of working things out. Young men think of force and aggression.

So what are the principles that lead to secession? From 1 Kings 12 we learn:

1. It is time to secede when rulers are wicked, ungodly, and tyrannical.

Listen to this: When power and authority become tyrannical, resistance is a duty. God has never ordained a tyrannical or despotic form of government.

Consider Rehoboam in light of Romans 13. Look at verses 3–4:

“For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.”

God ordained civil government for our good. So here’s the question: How can one who steals your wealth, takes your freedom, destroys your liberty, and enslaves your family be “for your good”?

The subjection and obedience that God demands in Romans 13:1–2 is dependent upon rulers being what God demands in verses 3, 4, and 6.

When verse 1 says, “Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God,” the word powers is the Greek *exousia*—meaning powers, authorities, or jurisdictions. God is saying all jurisdictions are ordained by Him.

In verse 2, “Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God,” the word ordinance refers to an arrangement or orderly structure God has established—for authority in the family, in the church, and in civil government.

In verse 4, twice the civil ruler is called a minister of God. The Greek word there is *diakonos*—from which we get deacon. It means servant. God has ordained civil government to be His servant—His deacon.

What does that mean? Civil rulers are to carry out God’s Word, do God’s will, and honor God by being submissive to Him. They are to be God’s ministers for good, not for evil.

The word “revenger” in verse 4 comes from the root meaning to exact righteousness. Government, then, is ordained to enforce God’s righteousness.

In verse 6, rulers are again called ministers, but here it is a different Greek word: *leitourgos*—from which we get liturgy. It means public service or worship. Just as worship is public acknowledgment of God, so civil government is to be God’s public service, continually attending to justice according to His law.

So, most today are willing to admit government has power. But they are not willing to admit what God says: that power and authority come from God, and that power and authority are to be used only as God directs.

If government is to be God's deacon, whom must it obey? God.

If it is to exact righteousness, whose righteousness must it enforce? God's.

If it is to be God's public worship, whom must it worship? God.

So how do we know when secession should even be considered? The answer: when rulers are ungodly, wicked, and tyrannical.

Here's the second principle: It is time to consider secession when rulers consistently violate their covenantal obligations.

When the people came to Rehoboam and said, "Make our burdens lighter, and we will serve thee," it never crossed his mind to review the covenant or to consult the constitution. Instead, he sought the counsel of old men, then young men—and chose the counsel of the young.

But rulers in Israel were to govern according to the law of God. They were to be limited and controlled by that covenant.

Listen to 2 Chronicles 19:6: "And \[Jehoshaphat] said to the judges, Take heed what ye do: for ye judge not for man, but for the LORD, who is with you in the judgment."

And in Deuteronomy 17:18–20, God required that every king make his own copy of the law and read it day and night—so that he could rule covenantally, biblically, and righteously.

I want you to turn, if you would, to 2 Samuel 23. Let me show you a very important passage. Let's begin reading with verse 1. Notice how many times David claims direct inspiration from God for one simple statement—he is emphasizing, repeatedly, that this statement is from God.

2 Samuel 23:1–3: "Now these be the last words of David. David the son of Jesse said, and the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel, said, The Spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word was in my tongue. The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God."

Four times David claims direct inspiration from God for this simple statement: “He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God.” It is impossible to rule in the fear of God apart from the Word of God. If you rule justly, you must rule biblically, for justice is found only in the Word of God. You cannot rule justly or righteously without ruling biblically.

Our fathers understood this principle. When this nation was founded, our forefathers required that their rulers be Christian and that they rule according to the Bible. I won’t spend a great deal of time proving this—there is a message I preached years ago, “The Biblical Attitude Toward Ungodly Rulers,” in which I quote many sources—but let me give you a few to show that our forefathers understood the Bible to be our law book.

New Haven Colony Charter, April 3, 1644—adopting rules for governing the courts of the New Haven Colony: “The judicial laws of God, as they were delivered by Moses, are to be a rule in all the courts in this jurisdiction.” That simple.

Do you realize that juries used to determine verdicts based upon the Word of God? Judges used to walk into the courtroom with an open Bible, and men stood out of respect for the Bible. Then they kicked the Bible out—and now they want you to stand in respect of them.

Charter of Delaware (1701): “And that also all persons who also profess to be believers in Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, shall be capable, notwithstanding other persuasions and practices in point of conscience and religion, to serve this government in any capacity, both legislatively and executively.” In other words, if you wanted to serve in Delaware in 1701, you had to be a Christian. You didn’t have to be a Baptist or a Presbyterian—but you had to be a Christian.

Constitution of Delaware (1776), Article 22: “Every person who shall be chosen a member of either house, or appointed to any office or place of trust, before taking his seat or entering upon the execution of his office, shall take the following oath or affirmation: I, ____, do profess faith in God the Father, and in Jesus Christ His only Son, and in the Holy Ghost, one God, blessed for evermore; and I do acknowledge the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be given by Divine inspiration.” You could not hold office when this country began unless you were a Christian who professed faith in Jesus Christ and believed the Bible to be the Word of God.

John Jay—believed to be the first Chief Justice of the Supreme Court—said, “Providence has given to our people the choice of their rulers, and it is their duty as well as their privilege and interest of our Christian nation to select and prefer Christians for their rulers.”

What have we done? We have done exactly what Rehoboam did: we have set aside the law of God as our covenant.

We adopted a Constitution, and—even if you want to argue purely constitutionally—listen to Article VI, paragraph 2 of the United States Constitution: “This Constitution, and the Laws of the United States which shall be made in Pursuance thereof; and all Treaties made, or which shall be made, under the Authority of the United States \[what’s the authority of the United States? the Constitution], shall be the supreme Law of the Land; and the Judges in every State shall be bound thereby, any Thing in the Constitution or Laws of any State to the Contrary notwithstanding.”

What does the Constitution say in Article VI, paragraph 2? It is to be the supreme law of the land. Every officer is to take an oath to uphold the Constitution. For years, presidents took their oath of office with their hand upon Deuteronomy 8, the passage of blessings and curses.

The Constitution is known as an express-powers or limited-powers document. That means the only authority the federal government has is that which is expressly granted in the Constitution. If it is not expressly stated in the Constitution that the federal government has a certain power, then it does not have it.

You ask, “Then how did they get all this power?” The answer is simple: They stole it. They usurped it. Any authority not given to the federal government by the states or the people has been usurped and stolen.

Patrick Henry said, “The Constitution is not an instrument for the government to restrain the people, it is an instrument for the people to restrain the government—lest it come to dominate their lives.” All I can say is that we haven’t been doing much restraining, have we? Because it certainly has come to dominate our lives.

There is a principle—clear in Scripture and in law—that when one party violates the covenant, it releases the other party from obedience to the covenant.

Remember the covenant entered into by the spies and Rahab in Joshua 2. They said, in effect, “We will spare you and your family if you have all your family in this house, and if you hang this red cord from the window so our men will know. If any of your family goes out into the street and is killed, that’s on them; but if we enter your house and kill anyone, their blood will be on us.” Once they agreed to this covenant and she let the spies down, they added:

Joshua 2:20: “And if thou utter this our business, then we will be quit of thine oath which thou hast made us to swear.”

In other words, Rahab, if you violate your end of the covenant, we are not obligated to keep ours.

All government is covenantal in nature. Even our Constitution says it “shall be the supreme Law of the Land.” So let me ask a few questions. Has the federal government consistently, constantly, and repeatedly usurped authority that was never given to it? Put it another way: Does the federal government consider, follow, and obey the Constitution?

We have failed to realize that rebellion can be on the part of government just as much as it can be on the part of the people.

When our forefathers seceded and left the Union in 1861, President Jefferson Davis said, “I love the Union, but I had rather leave the Union with the Constitution than remain in the Union without the Constitution.” When the South seceded, it was not to destroy the Constitution, but to preserve the principles in that Constitution. The Confederate Constitution, they argued, embodied the principles of the original Constitution.

Benjamin Franklin Grady of North Carolina said in 1899: “The cause of the South was the cause of constitutional government; the cause of government regulated by law; and the cause of honesty and fidelity in public servants. Nobler cause did man ever fight for?”

When is it time to think about secession?

Not only when you have rulers who are ungodly, wicked, and tyrannical, but secondly, when they consistently and constantly violate their covenantal and constitutional oath. Thirdly, it is time to think of secession when rulers endeavor to rule by force rather than by consent.

I read this earlier, but listen again to this section of the Declaration of Independence: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights; that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.—That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.” It is vital to understand that just powers come from the consent of the governed. If there is no consent, power is acquired only by usurpation and force.

Now look back at 1 Kings 12:14: “[Rehoboam] spake to the people after the counsel of the young men, saying, My father made your yoke heavy, and I will add to your yoke; my father also chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions.” What was Rehoboam planning to do? He planned to use force rather than consent to get the people to serve him. Rehoboam planned to compel the people to obey him and follow his will.

He planned to use hurtful, harmful, humanistic force to obtain submission. He threatened not only to squeeze them by taxes, but to chastise them by cruel laws and severe exactions—lashes, not merely as with whips, but as with scorpions, which would fetch blood at every stroke. In short, Rehoboam said: “You’re my sheep to be sheared; you’re my brute beasts to be laden with the heavy burdens I put upon you. I don’t care whether you love me or respect me—but you will serve me, because I will make you serve me.” That was his attitude.

Whenever there are penalties to force recognition of power or authority—and penalties to force submission—it’s time to consider secession. Martial law, heavy-handed tactics, a police state, and laws and regulations that rely upon force are all indicators that secession needs to be considered.

Thomas Jefferson said, “Tyranny is defined as that which is legal for the government but illegal for the citizens.” Think about that. If it’s lawful for the government to do a thing but unlawful for you to do the same thing—that is tyranny. Jefferson also said, “When the government fears the people, there is liberty. When the people fear the government, there is tyranny.”

The fourth principle we find from 1 Kings 12 is this: it’s time to consider secession when rulers seek to steal from the people to support a government contrary to the consent and will of the people.

Now, note what happened when the king answered the people roughly: “You think I’m going to make things lighter for you? I’m going to make it worse. My father beat you with whips; I will whip you with scorpions.”

1 Kings 12:16: “So when all Israel saw that the king hearkened not unto them, the people answered the king, saying, What portion have we in David? neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: to your tents, O Israel: now see to thine own house, David.” So Israel departed to their tents.

Israel left Judah and Judah’s king. There was a formal declaration of secession: “We have no portion in David; we have no inheritance in the son of Jesse. To your tents, O Israel.” In effect: We’re leaving. You take care of your own house; we’ll take care of ours.

Evidently Abraham Lincoln learned from Rehoboam, because Lincoln, like Rehoboam, planned on collecting taxes from people who did not owe taxes—he planned on collecting taxes from states that had seceded from the Union. Rehoboam aimed to do the same: Israel had seceded, had withdrawn—yet he said, “You’re going to pay for my government anyway.”

1 Kings 12:17–18: “But as for the children of Israel which dwelt in the cities of Judah, Rehoboam reigned over them. Then king Rehoboam sent Adoram, who was over the tribute; and all Israel

stoned him with stones, that he died. Therefore king Rehoboam made speed to get him up to his chariot, to flee to Jerusalem.”

So Rehoboam sent Adoram, the head tax collector, to Israel to collect the tribute, and Rehoboam went along to impress royal authority. The people of Israel stoned Adoram with stones, and Rehoboam said, in effect, “This isn’t working out the way I planned—I’d better get back to Jerusalem,” and he fled.

King George III intended the same sort of thing—forcing the collection of taxes upon the American colonists. The colonists did not owe those taxes; they were never under Parliament but had their own legislatures. Knowing war was coming, George Washington, George Mason, and Charles Broadwater met in Fairfax, Virginia, in July 1774 and drew up the Fairfax Resolves—twenty-four resolutions. Here are two.

Resolve No. 5 (1774)—and yes, it sounds like Congress today, so listen:

“Resolved, that the claim lately assumed and exercised by the British Parliament of making all such laws as they think fit to govern the people of these colonies, and to extort from us our money without our consent, is not only diametrically contrary to the first principles of the Constitution and the original compacts by which we are dependent upon the British crown and government, but is totally incompatible with the privileges of a free people and the natural rights of mankind; will render our own legislatures merely nominal and nugatory; and is calculated to reduce us from a state of freedom and happiness to slavery and misery.”

What were they saying? Parliament was trying to make any laws it thought fit—regardless of the colonists’ consent—and to extort money without consent. That violates constitutional compacts and reduces a free people to slavery and misery.

Resolve No. 6:

“Resolved, that taxation and representation are in their nature inseparable; and the right of withholding, or of giving and granting, their own money is the only effectual security to a free people against the encroachments of despotism and tyranny; and that whenever they yield the one, they must quickly fall prey to the other.”

Washington, Mason, and Broadwater were saying: If you do not have the right to withhold your money or to grant it at your pleasure, you are a slave. If we don’t like what government does, we don’t support it; then it can’t do it—it has no money. If we like it, we support it. But if government can force us to give it our money, then we are slaves. That is despotism and tyranny.

Jefferson wrote in 1826: “The mass of mankind has not been born with saddles on their backs, nor a favored few bootied and spurred, ready to ride them legitimately, by the grace of God.” He also wrote, “To compel a man to furnish funds for the propagation of opinions which he disbelieves and abhors is sinful and tyrannical.”

So, is secession biblical? Of course it is. We are bidden over and over in Scripture to separate ourselves from wickedness and ungodliness. In fact, look at 1 Kings 12:15: “Wherefore the king hearkened not unto the people; for the cause was from the LORD, that he might perform his saying, which the LORD spake by Ahijah the Shilonite unto Jeroboam the son of Nebat.” We know it is biblical because God says the cause was from Him.

Look also at 1 Kings 12:24: “Thus saith the LORD, Ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren the children of Israel: return every man to his house; for this thing is from me.” God said, “I’m the one who ordained the secession. I’m the one who ordained the separation.” God often uses the wickedness, impotence, stubbornness, and stupidity of rulers to bring about a separation of His people from them.

You say, “Wait a minute, Brother Weaver—if you’re saying Israel seceded here and that this thing was from God, how do you explain verse 19?”

1 Kings 12:19: “So Israel rebelled against the house of David unto this day.”

The root idea of the term translated “rebel” includes the notion of stepping away—to march away. Literally: Israel stepped away from the house of David. That is exactly what secession is: a stepping away, a walking away—leaving one confederation and beginning a different one.

Before I close, here is one vastly important application—my warning: We cannot, and must not, trade a bad for a worse.

What do I mean? Israel left Rehoboam. Yes, Rehoboam was a tyrant—wicked, unbiblical, ungodly. But foolish Israel turned around and made Jeroboam their king—an idolater and a tyrant as well. You cannot replace humanism with humanism. Why jump out of the frying pan into the fire? If we withdraw from a wicked, ungodly, humanistic confederation, we must have something better to replace it with. You cannot replace something with nothing.

So answer this in your own mind. If our society collapsed today—total, complete collapse—and you had to rebuild it from scratch tomorrow, what law-structure would you use? God’s law-structure, or man’s? If you say, “We’ll use man’s law-structure,” then you are heading right back to the same place you wanted to leave.

Do you remember the theme of the book of Judges? You find it in Judges 17 and Judges 21: “In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did that which was right in his own eyes.” When you build on humanism, inevitably and invariably, you will end up in either anarchy or totalitarianism. It is only God’s law that is designed for liberty, freedom, and responsibility. Man’s law is designed to enslave and destroy.

Remember what our Lord said in Proverbs 8:36: “All they that hate me love death.” The only society that man can build apart from Jesus Christ is a society of death.

John Winthrop said: “Men, in a word, must necessarily be controlled either by a power within them or by a power without them—either by the Word of God or by the strong arm of man; either by the Bible or the bayonet. Those who will not be ruled and governed by the Bible will have to be ruled by the bayonet.” If you cannot rebuild a society based upon the Word of God, then you are rebuilding only to be destroyed again.

John Quincy Adams said: “The law given from Sinai—that is, the Ten Commandments—was a civil and municipal, as well as a moral and religious, code.”

Charles Carroll, one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, said: “Without morals a republic cannot subsist for any length of time. They, therefore, who are decrying the Christian religion, whose morality is so sublime and pure, are undermining the solid foundation of morals—the best security for the duration of free governments.”

And George Washington declared: “It is impossible to rightly govern the world without God and the Bible.”

You say, “Brother Weaver, do you think some of these states will ever secede?” I don’t know. I surely hope so. But I will give you this warning: if you successfully secede and you do not build upon the Word of God, and you do not have the Lord Jesus Christ as your true King and only King, then you are wasting your time. You will end up again in servitude and slavery. Do not trade a bad for a worse. If we secede, let us rebuild upon the Word of God.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow before Thee. We thank Thee for Thy Word. We thank Thee for the principles and the truth of Thy Word. Help us clarify our thinking. Give us wisdom, Lord, that we may serve Thee and obey Thee in every area of our lives. In Christ’s name we pray. Amen.