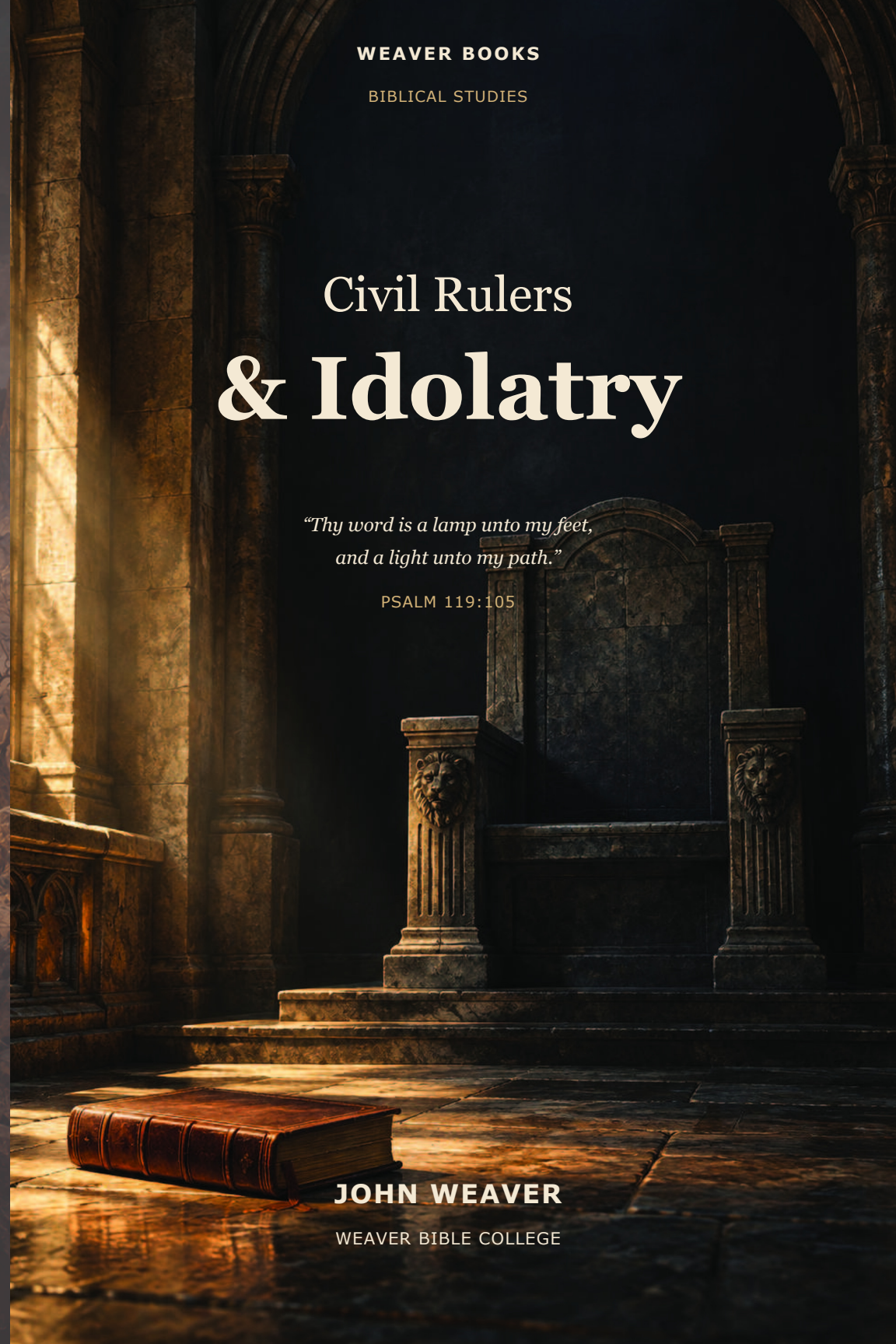
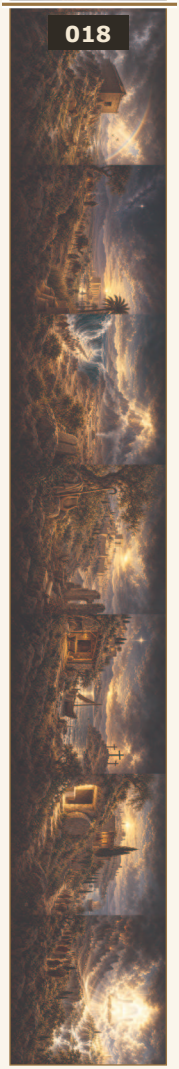

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"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,
and a light unto my path."
PSALM 119:105
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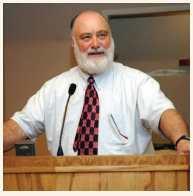
Little children, keep yourselves from idols.

1 JOHN 5:21, EXCERPT

Idolatry can take the form of public power as well as private devotion. John Weaver considers the role of civil rulers in directing a people's loyalties, drawing on the history of Israel. These messages examine state claims, human motives, and the consequences of treating delegated authority as though it were absolute.

"You may be an idolater in your mind well before there is ever a physical image."

JOHN WEAVER



John Weaver

John Weaver's sermons form the teaching collection presented by Weaver Bible College. This volume gathers his teaching from that collection.

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CHAPTER 1

Civil Rulers & Idolatry - 1

Civil Rulers and Idolatry

SCRIPTURE READING - 2 Kings 23:1-15 (KJV)

Introduction and Context

This is Part 1 of a two-part message. I will be dealing with the title, Civil Rulers and Idolatry. I would encourage you to pray for those meetings and for travel mercies.

And the king sent, and they gathered unto him all the elders of Judah and of Jerusalem. And the king went up into the house of the Lord, and all the men of Judah, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem with him, and the priests, and the prophets, and all the people, both small and great. And he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant which was found in the house of the Lord. And the king stood by a pillar, and made a covenant before the Lord to walk after the Lord, and to keep his commandments, and his testimonies, and his statutes with all their heart and all their soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people

stood to the covenant. And the king commanded Hilkiah the high priest, and the priests of the second order, and the keepers of the door, to bring forth out of the temple of the Lord all the vessels that were made for Baal, and for the grove, and for all the hosts of heaven.

And he burned them without Jerusalem in the fields of Kidron, and carried the ashes of them into Bethel. And he put down the idolatrous priests whom the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense in the high places in the cities of Judah, and in the places round about Jerusalem, them also that burned incense unto Baal, to the sun, to the moon, and to the planets, and to all the hosts of heaven. And he brought out the grove from the house of the Lord, without Jerusalem, unto the brook Kidron, and burned it at the brook Kidron, and stamped it small to powder, and cast the powder thereof upon the graves of the children of the people. And he broke down the houses of the Sodomites that were by the house of the Lord, where the women wove hangings for the grove. And he brought all the priests out of the cities of Judah, and defiled the high places where the priests had burned incense from Geva to Beersheba, and broke down the high places of the gates that were in the entering in of the gate of Joshua, the governor of the city, which were on

SCRIPTURE READING - 2 Kings 23:1-15 (KJV)

a man's left hand at the gate of the city. Nevertheless, the priests of the high places came not up to the altar of the Lord in Jerusalem, but they did eat of the unleavened bread among their brethren. And he defiled Topheth, which is in the valley of the children of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter to pass through the fire to Molech. And he took away the horses that the kings of Judah had given to the sun at the entering in the house of the Lord by the chamber of Nathan Melech, the chamberlain, which was in the suburbs, and burned the chariots of the sun with fire. And the altars that were on the top of the upper chamber of Ahaz, which the kings of Judah had made, and the altars which Manasseh had made in the two courts of the house of the Lord, did the king beat down and break them down from thence, and cast the dust of them into

> Brook Kidron. And the high places that were before Jerusalem that were on the right hand on the Mount of Corruption, which Solomon the king of Israel had builded for Ashtaroth, the abomination of the Sidonians, and for Chemosh, the abomination of the Moabites, and for Milcom, the abomination of the children of Ammon, did the king defile. And he break in pieces the images, and cut down the groves, and filled their places with the bones of men. Moreover, the altar that was at Bethel, and the high place which Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, had made, both that altar and the high place, he break down, and burned the high place, and stamped it small to powder, and burned the grove.

This message is part one on civil rulers and idolatry. Many years ago, I brought two messages along this vein: one entitled "Statism is Idolatry," and the other titled "The Biblical Attitude Toward Ungodly Rulers." It is not my intent to re-preach those messages, but to build upon them. It may be necessary to give one or two important points from them. Those of you who have read my two books, The Christian and Civil Government and The Sovereignty of God and Civil Government, have a further development of this theme. When I read through 2 Kings chapter 23, all of this simply jumped out again.

The Broad Definition of Idolatry

When you talk about civil rulers and idolatry, it is common for each of us to think of idolatry as a bowing down to idols. That is the concept that immediately pops into our minds. It seems as if we cannot escape the graven-image mentality, that we must have a graven image in front of us in order for there to be idolatry.

But idolatry is exceedingly broad. In Colossians 3:5 and Ephesians 5:5, you will find this statement: "Covetousness is idolatry." Isn't that amazing? Covetousness is idolatry. You do not have to have a physical image in order to be an idolater. In other words, if you are a covetous individual in any area of your life, then God says you are an idolater. One does not need to bow down to a graven image to be an idolater.

The very word image comes from the word imagination. In Romans 1:21, the Word of God makes this very clear. “Because that when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.” God says first they were vain in their imaginations. Then, in verse 22, “Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,” and verse 23 says, “and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things.”

The point is that the imagination precedes the image. You may be an idolater in your mind well before there is ever a physical image. The truth of the matter is this: Whenever you think unscripturally and unbiblically toward God, you are an idolater. The only God that exists is the God of the Bible who has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ. All other gods are merely figments of man’s imagination, and therefore they are idols. To the degree that you think unbiblically toward the one true and living God who has revealed Himself in the Bible, to that degree, you also are an idolater. If someone would repent and follow the Lord, this is what could be done about it.

We have to understand a simple truth. Automobiles do not begin in Detroit or any other city. Automobiles begin in the mind of an engineer somewhere. Detroit is merely the plant that puts them together. Likewise, idolatry always begins in the mind, and it may stay there, especially for a long period of time, without revealing itself in a physical manner. Therefore, we must make sure that our thoughts are right concerning God, and that we are thinking biblical thoughts, those thoughts that He has revealed in His Word, in order that we might honor Him and our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Man's Natural Proneness to Idolatry

Man by nature—that is, unsaved man—is prone to idolatry. Normally, he either worships himself or some god of his imagination. It is only as we are convicted and converted as individuals that we begin to see and understand the full extent of our idolatry. Do you realize the average American considers himself or herself a Christian and yet has no biblical concept of God, of Christ, of sin, or salvation?

I never will forget preaching in Illinois and seeing a little teenage girl. I was witnessing to her, and I asked her if she was a Christian. She said, “I don't know. I'll have to ask my mother.” The next day I asked her if she had asked her mother. She said, “Yes, I did.” I asked what her mother's response was. She said, “Well, of course, we're Christians. We live in America, don't we?” That was their understanding of being a Christian: living in America. You can live in America and certainly not be a Christian. That is certainly true and very obviously and patently true. But the average professing Christian has no biblical concept of God.

Unsaved men are prone to idolatry. But there is an entity taught in the Bible that is even more prone to idolatry than unsaved men as individuals: civil government. Governments, or civil rulers—those who are in authority—oftentimes willingly, readily, knowingly, purposely, and deliberately lead their people into idolatry.

Civil Government's Greater Proneness to Idolatry

How do we know that? The answer is very simple. The Bible tells us so. History verifies it, and practical observation attests to the truth.

Here is a foundational truth: in reality, God and God alone is sovereign. I'm telling you this is a foundational truth. You need to lock this down in your mind. He is the only sovereign. Truthfully and practically, I hope you understand that there can only be one sovereign, one ultimate, one absolute.

The Sovereignty of God as Foundational Truth

There may be individuals who are striving for sovereignty, fighting for sovereignty, and wanting sovereignty. But there can only be one Sovereign, one Absolute, and one Ultimate at the time. That one Sovereign is God Himself. God has never been unseated. He has never abdicated. He has never been voted out of office, and He will never be voted out of office, for He always was, always is, and always shall be the only true and living Sovereign God of the universe. So marker down: God is sovereign and Him alone.

All of those who wish to dethrone Him shall be destroyed. They may seek after His sovereignty, but they will never acquire it.

Why emphasize this truth? Because everyone must have a sovereign. Whether saved or unsaved, you must have a sovereign. Society nor individuals can exist without a law system. What does that mean? You must have a law system. Are you listening? And you must have someone with authority to give you that law system. When God, the absolute Sovereign, is denied, His law system is denied only so that you may elevate yourself, someone else, or something else as sovereign in His place. God's sovereignty is denied in order that it might be replaced with another false sovereignty. Whenever men deny God's absolute sovereignty, it is so that they may place sovereignty either in themselves or some other entity. Usually, that other entity is civil government.

Now listen to me very carefully. Each of us has heard these old clichés: “You can't fight City Hall. They can do whatever they please. If you don't submit, they'll destroy you.” Do you realize that when those clichés are used, the people saying them are declaring that government is sovereign and can do as it pleases, whenever it pleases, to whomever it pleases? Those statements are an absolute denial of God's sovereignty. Let me say this again, folks: if you do not acknowledge God as your absolute Sovereign, you will place sovereignty in some other entity, and usually it is civil government.

God's Three Institutions and Their Boundaries

God has created only three institutions. He created the family as a ministry of education, the church as a ministry of grace, and civil government as a ministry of justice. The family, the church, and the state, or civil government, are each creations of God. The creation cannot become the creator. Since God created these three institutions, He has laid down their boundaries and limits. Just as the family cannot rebel and become the creator or sovereign, and just as the church cannot rebel and become the creator and sovereign, likewise civil government cannot rebel and become the creator and sovereign. It may attempt to do so, but it cannot do so. It is the Creator who limits, confines, and sets boundaries for each institution. Whenever the family, the church, or civil government violates those boundaries, it is in rebellion against God and, of course, ends up destroying itself.

The perfect illustration is found in Adam and Eve in the garden. What did the serpent say? You need to eat this fruit. The reason you need to eat it is because God doth know that in the day that you eat thereof, your eyes shall be opened and you shall be as gods, knowing good from evil. And what did Adam do? He took of the fruit and promptly destroyed himself and his posterity. Adam attempted to be the creator, something other than what God had created him for.

Let me ask and answer another question before we look at 2 Kings chapter 23. I have told you from the Bible that governments are prone to idolatry. Why are civil rulers and civil governments prone to idolatry?

Why Civil Governments Are Prone to Idolatry

There are a multitude of answers, but I want to give you several to begin with. The first is very clear: government deals with power. When you are talking about power, you are talking about power to compel, power to force, and power to destroy. Most men cannot wield power under God. They want to be equal to God or above God. Thus they end up abusing, misusing, or usurping that power. When man wants to abuse that power, he wants to play God, make men in his image, and make men do what he would have them do, because he is playing God.

Most of the idolatrous religions found in the Bible are power religions. By power religions, I am talking about witchcraft, Moloch worship, and a host of other false religions. They derive their power from below. If you cannot get it legally, lawfully, or from God, then you get it from below—from the devil. They are power religions, and government deals with power. Secondly, government also deals with law.

It is difficult for fallen man to understand one simple truth: it is God who gives the law. Do you know what civil rulers are bound to do according to the Word of God? Civil rulers are bound to enforce God's law, not make their own laws. The Bible says in Isaiah 33 and verse 22, "For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king; he will save us." Who is our lawgiver? God alone. In James 4 and verse 12, the Word of God says, "There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy." One lawgiver. That's God. That's

not Congress. That's not the president. That's not any king. Except King Jesus, no earthly king is the one lawgiver able to save and destroy. Law deals with right and wrong. God determines what is right and what is wrong, but when men want to play God, they determine for themselves what is right and what is wrong. That's exactly what Adam wanted to do back in the garden.

Why are civil governments prone to idolatry? First of all, government deals with power. Secondly, government deals with law. Thirdly, governments deal with money—lots and lots of money. All of us have heard the golden rule according to the world: He who has the gold rules. That is their mentality. According to Scripture, men have become enamored with money. What does Scripture say? It is the love of money that is the root of all evil.

When wealth can be obtained very easily by fraud or by hook or crook, and men discover that with all this wealth they may accumulate power and control beyond their imagination, government becomes a dangerous instrument. In Revelation 18 and verse 13, Scripture deals with those civil rulers who deal in the souls of men. Stop and think about this. Think of the people in America. You do not have to go to Russia, China, or Africa. Just think of the people in America who have been subsidized and lobotomized and corrupted by governmental pottage and subsidies.

Government is one of the prime movers on idolatry. Its motives are usually very selfish, very crass, and even its false worship is never sincere. It is always there for a purpose, and that purpose is control.

Let us look at 2 Kings chapter 23, beginning with verse 4. I have been reading through 2 Chronicles this week, and there are a multitude of passages in 2 Chronicles that tie right in with this passage.

Biblical Examples of Civil Rulers Introducing Idolatry

Here is what the Scripture says: “And the king commanded Hilkiah the high priest, and the priests of the second order, and the keepers of the door, to bring forth out of the temple of the Lord all the vessels that were made for Baal, and for the grove, and for all the host of

heaven. And he burned them without Jerusalem in the fields of Kidron, and carried the ashes of them unto Bethel."

When you read that, you have to ask yourself: How in the world did all of these vessels for Baal and the grove get into the house of God? These vessels were inside the temple. Remember, the grove was Asherah, or Asherah, or Venus, a sex goddess worshipped as the consort of Baal. How did all of these vessels and all of these things get into the temple of God?

The temple of God was to be a sacred place, a house set aside for the one true and living God, who revealed Himself in Jesus Christ. His house had been dedicated for His honor and glory back in 1 Kings chapter 8. Now it is filled with all the vessels of all the false gods under heaven. How in the world could the house of God become so corrupted? Look in verse 5. I am asking that question, and we are going to answer it: "And he"—we are still talking about the king, the one who was willing to do what was right—"put down the idolatrous priests."

"whom the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense in the high places, in the cities of Judah, and in the places round about Jerusalem, them also that burned incense unto Baal, to the sun, to the moon, and to the planets, and to all the hosts of heaven." Now in verse 5 we read about all of these idolatrous priests. An idolatrous priest is either a priest who is not of the tribe of Levi, or an apostate priest of the tribe of Levi who served all of these false gods. These apostate priests were not appointed by God, nor did they meet God's requirements. If God did not appoint and ordain these priests, then we must ask, who did? Who appointed them? Who made them? Certainly not the people. The people did not have power to make a man a priest. Look in verse 5 again: "And he put down the idolatrous priests whom the kings of Judah had ordained." Who put these apostate, wicked priests in power?

The civil rulers. They put them there. They alone had the power to make them and to make sure that their demands were met. If you are a king, and you have the power of life and death, then you say, You either submit or die. That power is still in the hands of civil government today. You either submit or die. So we find that it was the kings who made these priests.

Look in verse 6 now: "And he brought out the grove from the house of the Lord without Jerusalem, unto the brook Kidron, and burned it at the brook Kidron, and stamped it small to powder, and cast the powder thereof upon the graves of the children of the people." The Bible tells us that he brought out this grove, this Asherah, this carving of this goddess, sex goddess, out of the house of the Lord. How in the world did this thing get into God's house? Look back in your Bibles to 1 Kings chapter 15.

At least King Asa had a little sense. In 1 Kings 15:12-13, we read, "And he took away the Sodomites out of the land and removed all the idols that his fathers had made." That is, the civil rulers. "And also Maacah, his mother, even her he removed from being queen because she had made an idol in her grove and Asa destroyed her idol and burned it by the brook Kidron." Here was the queen who had an idol of Asherah.

In 1 Kings 16:33, we find another king: "And Ahab made a grove; and Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him." King Ahab had an Asherah himself, an idol of this sex goddess. Then, in 2 Kings 21:7, we are told that King Manasseh put this idol in the temple: "And he," that is King Manasseh, "set a graven image of the grove that he had made in the house, of which the Lord said to David and to Solomon his son, In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, will I put my name for ever." It was King Manasseh that put the image of the grove in the house of the Lord.

The point I am trying to make is this: Every time you see this happening, it is civil rulers. It is not the people. Now, it is true that the people were guilty of following these false idols and worshipping them, but it was the kings and queens who were instituting them.

In 2 Kings 23:7, we read, "And he break down the houses of the Sodomites that were by the house of the Lord, where the women wove hangings for the grove." As you read this passage, not only are all of these vessels to Baal and Asherah in the house of God, but now you find that the Sodomites and the prostitutes are either by it or in it as well: "And he break down the houses of the Sodomites"—plural, by the way—"the houses of the Sodomites that were by the house of

the Lord." They were close to it, "where the women wove hangings for the grove."

Since the grove was inside the temple, evidently the sodomites and the religious prostitutes went into the temple to perform their functions. How did they get into the temple? If you read 2 Kings chapter 21, you find that it was King Manasseh who placed the idol of the grove in the temple and allowed the sodomites and prostitutes in the temple: “Where the women wove hangings for the grove.” The word hangings actually means little tents.

What were they doing? They were giving these little tents to people who wanted to go into the temple for sex. Male and female, it did not matter. Remember, this was inside the temple. Who has the power to make prostitution and sodomy legal—not lawful, but legal? Only civil rulers. We should learn that the usual culprits in leading the people into idolatry are their civil rulers. They are the only ones that can legalize sin. They cannot make it lawful, but they can legalize it.

Sodomy and prostitution are closely connected to, and are always involved in, the power religions. What are politicians and civil rulers concerned about? Power. Control. Control is a key word. Consider how the sects, any and all kinds, are involved in Satanism, black magic, and the occult. Why? Because it is a power religion.

I read today, and it was a headline yesterday, how the Europeans are paying big money for barnyard sex, bestiality—horses and cows. All of this is from the occult. It is a power religion. That is what those sodomites and prostitutes were doing in the temple, because the philosophy is, if you cannot get power from above, you get power from below, and it works out with control.

Look in 2 Kings 23, verse 10. The Bible says, “And he defiled Topheth, which is in the valley of the children of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter to pass through the fire to Molech.”

Verse 10 deals with Moloch worship. You will find the word Moloch pronounced and spelled differently throughout the Bible: Moloch, Melech, Milcom, Malcom; it is all the same. Moloch worship dealt with the sacrificing and dedication of children. The Bible says,

"and he defiled Topheth." The word Topheth means literally to roll as a drum. Because Moloch was a metal false god, usually made of brass or something like this, he was standing with his arms out.

There was a huge fire built beneath him. When his arms and hands were red and scorching hot, they would place a little baby in his hands, and the baby would roll down his arms into his stomach, where, of course, he would be consumed in the flames. They rolled the drums to cover the screams and cries of the child as he was literally burned to death. Now, sometimes, not all children were burned to death. Sometimes they were taken and merely passed over the heat of Moloch's arms in the act of purification and dedication. Thus their lives were given to him, usually as a prostitute, male or female, in honor of Moloch and his worship.

Adam Clarke, in his commentary, speaking about the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, says, "It is here said that Josiah defiled this place that no man might make his son or daughter to pass through the fire. He destroyed the image of Moloch and so polluted the place where he stood, or his temple, that it was rendered in every way abominable. The Rabbins say that Topheth had its name from Toph, a drum, because the instruments of this kind were used to drown the cries of the children that were put into the burning arms of Moloch to be scorched to death."

This may be true, as may also be the following definition: Topheth, or the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, was a place near Jerusalem where the filth and offal of the city were thrown, and where a constant fire was kept up to consume the wretched remains of executed criminals. It was a human shambles, a public chopping block, where the arms and legs of men and women were quartered off by the thousands.

Since Moloch worship is so vile and wicked, involves the offering of human sacrifice, and is condemned by God all through Scripture, would you like to take a guess as to who introduced Moloch worship into the land of Israel? It was King Solomon. You'll find that in First Kings, chapter 11. Look, if you would please, at verse 5 and then at verse 7. "For Solomon went after Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom," or Molech, "the abomination of the Ammonites," and, "Then did Solomon build a high place for

Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon." Who built it? King Solomon.

Who introduced it in the land? A civil ruler. Are you getting the picture that civil rulers are prone to idolatry? Go back in your Bibles to 2 Kings chapter 23 and look at verse 11. Josiah is certainly reforming the land. The verse says, "He took away the horses that the kings of Judah had given to the sun, at the entering in of the house of the Lord, by the chamber of Nathan-Melech, the chamberlain, which was in the suburbs, and burned the chariots of the sun with fire."

What? Judahites—people of Judah—worshipping the sun? Oh, yes. John Gill, in his commentary, said that the kings who gave the horses and chariots for the service and sacrifice of the sun were probably Manasseh and Ammon. Horses were sacred to the sun among many heathen nations, including the Massagetae in Scythia, the Persians, Babylonians, and Ethiopians.

These horses were provided for sun worshippers to ride and meet the sun in the morning at its rising and pay homage to it. But certain nations slew the horses and sacrificed them as burnt offerings to the sun, as many ancient writers asserted. The people of India did the same, and sacrificed horses to Apollo, who was regarded as the sun. Because horses were the swiftest creatures, they offered them to the swiftest of their gods, as Herodotus and Heliodorus observed. The stables where these horses were kept stood at the entering of the house of the Lord and were kept by a chamberlain; the suburbs extended from there throughout Jerusalem.

So here were kings of Judah who had given horses and chariots for the worship of the sun. God required each king to have his own copy of the law and read therein every day. These kings did not do so, and they led their people into idolatry.

Look at verse 12. This is a passage that should shock you: "And the altars that were on the top of the upper chamber of Ahaz, which the kings of Judah had made, and the altars which Manasseh had made in the two courts of the house of the Lord, did the king beat down

and break them down from thence, and cast the dust of them into the brook Kidron."

We are reading about a chamber that Ahaz made and altars that Ahaz, Manasseh, and other kings had made. These false altars were put into the temple. Yet when you go back and read 1 Kings chapter 8, concerning Solomon's building and dedication of the temple, you will not find a chamber of Ahaz in it, nor all these other false altars. How did they get into the temple? Let me show you a couple of them. Look in your Bibles to 2 Kings chapter 16.

I hate to say it, and I know it is because of their depravity and lost condition, but it seems that civil rulers have a propensity to stupidity. That is historically true, but let me show you one who was really stupid. Begin reading 2 Kings chapter 16 with verse 5, and watch carefully.

Remember, we are reading about the chamber of Ahaz and the altar he built that got into the temple: "Then Rezin, king of Syria, and Pekah, son of Remaliah, king of Israel, came up to Jerusalem to war, and they besieged Ahaz, but could not overcome him. And at that time, Rezin, king of Syria, recovered Elath to Syria, and drove the Jews from Elath, and the Syrians came to Elath and dwelt there unto this day. So Ahaz, king Ahaz, sent messengers to Tiglath-Pileser, king of Assyria, saying, I am thy servant, and thy son, come up and save me out of the hand of the king of Syria, and out of the hand of the king of Israel, which rise up against me."

"And Ahaz took the silver and gold that was found in the house of the Lord," and, rather than sending his own, took most of it from the house of the Lord first, "and in the treasures of the king's house," and sent it as a present to the king of Assyria. The king of Assyria hearkened unto him, went up against Damascus, took it, carried its people captive to Kir, and slew Rezin.

"And King Ahaz went to Damascus to meet Tiglath-Pileser, king of Assyria, and saw an altar that was at Damascus. And King Ahaz sent to Uriah the priest the fashion of the altar, and the pattern of it, according to all the workmanship thereof. And Uriah the priest built an altar according to all that King Ahaz had sent him from Damascus. So Uriah the priest made it against King Ahaz came from

Damascus. And when the king was come from Damascus, the king saw the altar: and the king approached to the altar, and offered thereon. And he offered his burnt offering and his meat offering, and poured his drink offering, and sprinkled the blood of his peace offering upon the altar."

Now, what in the world has King Ahaz done? Syria has come against him, and he is unable to defeat them. So he hires the king of Assyria. Assyria comes down, and they defeat the king of Syria. Ahaz goes to Damascus to meet the king of Assyria, sees an altar, and likes it. He says, "That's what I'm going to worship at." The altar was unable to protect Syria from Assyria. Now he is going to take that altar, which could not protect the Syrian people from the king of Assyria, and make it his private altar. That is exactly what he did. He sent the pattern, the high priest made it according to the king's command, and the king worshiped at that altar, not at God's altar.

Consider Amaziah, the thistle king, in 2 Chronicles 25:14–16: "Now it came to pass, after that Amaziah was come from the slaughter of the Edomites," after defeating them, "that he brought the gods of the children of Seir, and set them up to be his gods, and bowed down himself before them, and burned incense to them. Wherefore, the anger of the Lord was kindled against Amaziah, and he sent unto him a prophet, which said unto him, Why hast thou sought after the gods of the people, which could not deliver their own people out of thine hand? And it came to pass, as he talked with him, that the king said unto him, Art thou made of the king's counsel? forbear; why shouldest thou be smitten? Then the prophet forbear, and said, I know that God is determined to destroy thee, because thou hast done this, and hast not hearkened to my counsel."

What did Amaziah do? He defeated the kings of Edom, then took their gods—gods that could not protect them—and made them his gods. Stupidity must run in the family of civil rulers. It blows my mind.

In 2 Kings 21:4–5, King Manasseh put altars of every kind into the house of God: "And he built altars in the house of the Lord, of which the Lord said, In Jerusalem will I put my name. And he built altars for all the hosts of heaven in the two courts of the house of the Lord."

He wanted to worship the sun or the moon or the stars or anybody. He made up an altar. Who put those altars in the temple? The king—the civil rulers. In 2 Kings 23:13-14, we find the altars and images that Solomon had built for his wives: "And the high places that were before Jerusalem, that were on the right hand of the mount of corruption, which Solomon the king of Israel had builded for Ashtoreth, the abomination of the Zidonians, and for Chemosh, the abomination of the Moabites, and for Milcom," or Molech, "the abomination of the children of Ammon, did the king defile. And he break in pieces the images, and cut down the groves, and filled their places with the bones of men."

This passage speaks about all the altars that Solomon built for his wives. The Mount of Corruption refers to the Mount of Olives, where these altars were built. The Mount of Olives had three summits, and King Solomon places altars on the middle summit.

Note this as we go through the passage: It is not the people who are introducing idolatry into the land. It is always the civil rulers. They have the power, the money, and the position to do so.

Verse 15 says, "Moreover, the altar that was at Bethel, and the high place which Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, had made, both that altar and the high place he break down, and burned the high place, and stamped it small to powder, and burned the grove." This tells us about Jeroboam the son of Nebat, one of the first kings of Israel who led Israel into idolatry. Let me show you how and why he did it. In 1 Kings 12, beginning with verse 25, we find the account.

In 1 Kings 12:25, then Jeroboam built Shechem in Mount Ephraim, and dwelt therein, and went out from thence, and built Penuel. Remember, he had taken ten tribes away from Rehoboam. Solomon's son had left Rehoboam two tribes. And Jeroboam said in his heart, “Now shall the kingdom return to the house of David,” if this people went up to do sacrifice in the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, even unto Rehoboam king of Judah, and they shall kill me, and go again to Rehoboam king of Judah. Whereupon, the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, to the people, “It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem.”

"Behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And he set the one in Bethel, and the other put he in Dan. And this thing became a sin: for the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan. And he made an house of high places, and made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi."

"And Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like unto the feast that is in Judah. And he offered upon the altar. So did he in Bethel, sacrificing unto the calves that he had made: and he placed in Bethel the priests of the high places which he had made. So he offered upon the altar which he had made in Bethel the fifteenth day of the eighth month, even in the month which he had devised of his own heart; and ordained a feast unto the children of Israel: and he offered upon the altar, and burnt incense."

There are several things you need to understand about this passage. First, this idolatry was a deliberately planned and premeditated act by Jeroboam and his counselors. Look at verse 28: "Whereupon the king took" what? "counsel, and made two calves of gold." This thing was deliberate.

Second, in verse 27, he was willing to sell the people into idolatry for personal gain and selfish reasons: "If this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, even unto Rehoboam king of Judah, and they shall kill me." What did Jeroboam realize? He was not of the lineage of David. He said, in effect, I cannot let these people go down to worship at Jerusalem. If they go down there, eventually their heart will turn back to Rehoboam, and I will be dead. What will happen to my kingdom, my power, my position, my sons, and my dynasty? Have you ever known a politician who, once he got in power, did not want to stay in power? He was willing to sell the whole nation into idolatry just so he could remain in power.

Thirdly, he appealed to the selfishness of the people and made it appear that he was interested only in their care and comfort. Look at verse 28: "Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem."

"Behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." You do not have to go to Jerusalem. That is so far, so expensive, and so inconvenient. You may worship here with comfort and convenience and no expense to you. We are just concerned about you; we are looking out for your best interest. Hello, I am from the government, and I am here to help you. That was the mentality.

Fourth, he ordained false prophets, false feast days, and a false worship, according to verse 33, which he devised according to his own heart. God was not in it. Scripture was not in it. He designed it.

Fifth, one can see royal authority and position being used again to influence and sway the people. If you want to please the king, obtain governmental contracts, receive governmental subsidies, or have his blessing, what do you do? You go to church where he goes to church. When it came to Jeroboam II, this truly came into play. When Amos was prophesying against Jeroboam II, the statist priest said to Amos, "Prophesy not again any more at Bethel: for it is the king's chapel, and it is the king's court." Thus the king's rule and the king's religion had become one. You are either for me or against me; and if you are for me, you will worship where I worship.

Methods of Leading into Idolatry: Force and Seduction

There are two methods that civil rulers use to lead a people into idolatry. In 2 Kings 17:21, Scripture says, "For he rent Israel from the house of David; and they made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king." It continues, "And Jeroboam drove Israel from following the Lord, and made them sin a great sin." The word drove, or drave, means to drive, compel, or thrust with force. Jeroboam drove them physically, financially, emotionally, and in every other way possible into worshiping the calves he designed. He forced them into it: You either worship here or you die; you worship here or you do not go down south to Judah; you worship here or you do without. I am the king.

He drove them. Force was the main ingredient, and he was going to use force to accomplish his purpose. Force does not always work, however, and it does not always work with some people. At this time, many people left Israel and came to Judah and Benjamin because of this.

In 2 Kings 21:9, we see the ploy that Manasseh used. Manasseh was more cunning. The Bible says, “But they hearkened not:” that is, they did not hearken to God and to God’s law. “And Manasseh seduced them to do more evil than did the nations whom the Lord destroyed before the children of Israel.” Note that Manasseh seduced them.

The word seduced means to cause to stagger, to cause to go astray, or to vacillate. He debauched the people by seduction, by his encouragement, by his examples, and by his program.

Here is exactly what it means and exactly where we are today. There are plenty of people in this country professing to be Christians who would like to take a stand and come out strongly on behalf of Jesus Christ. But they understand that if they do, they will upset the powers that be. Do you see the vacillation? Do you see the seduction? We want to do right, but we are afraid to do right. We want to please God, but we do not want to suffer. We want to obey the Lord, but we do not want to lose everything we have worked for. We want to honor Christ, but we do not want to go to jail. Who causes people to vacillate and waver back and forth? Government, because government has the power either to use force or to seduce.

Government says, “If you go along with us, look what all we can do for you and look what all we will do for you.” We have government faith programs in this country. If you will sign up and be one of our state churches, we will give you funds for your faith.

In 2 Chronicles 21:11, concerning King Joram, the Bible says, “Moreover he made high places in the mountains of Judah, and caused the inhabitants of Jerusalem to commit fornication, and compelled Judah thereto.” You will worship my gods. In verse 13, God says, “…but hast walked in the way of the kings of Israel, and hast made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to go a whoring, like to the whoredoms of the house of Ahab, and also hast slain thy brethren of thy father’s house, which were better than thyself.” Note that God says He forced the children into idolatry.

When you and I think of a tyrant, we think of a wicked, strong-armed despot who says, “You will do what I say or you will die.” But if you look up the definition of a tyrant, you will also find

that he is one who uses lawful power unlawfully. A tyrant may get into office lawfully, but then he may use that lawful power unlawfully, and he is still a tyrant.

Modern Applications and Conclusion

It should be no question as to this truth: civil governments are leaders in idolatry. What is amazing to me is that the American people cannot see that political correctness is another religion. Political correctness is idolatry. It is a state religion, seeking to please man and not God.

It is developing an attitude contrary to Scripture. What does Scripture require of us in 2 Corinthians 10:5? That every thought of ours be brought into captivity to Jesus Christ. Yet political correctness says, "No. Pluralism, multiculturalism, multireligiousism. Well, they are all equally fine." It is all idolatry. Political correctness is designed to lead people away from the Word of God and make them follow what government thinks best, and not what God says is best. Governments are prone to idolatry because they want the power, prestige, position, prominence, and preeminence that belong to God alone.

The second application is this: throughout history, it has been government that has led the people in forsaking Scripture and the one true and living God. If you study Scripture and history, you will find that most civil rulers did it for purely selfish reasons. They were not concerned about the people; they were concerned with their own party, their own power, and their own position.

The last one is this. I want to read a quote from the Alabama Constitution, Article 1, Section 35: "The sole object and only legitimate end of government is to protect the citizen in the enjoyment of life, liberty, and property, and when government assumes other functions, it is usurpation and oppression." As the Alabama Constitution, Article 1, Section 35, and Romans 13 say, the only thing God has ordained government for is to punish the wicked and protect the righteous. When government assumes any other function, it is usurpation and oppression.

The leading culprits in idolatry are always civil rulers. Father, we ask in the name of Jesus Christ for your love, grace, and mercy. We pray that you would teach us, open our eyes, and give us understanding, that we may serve thee and worship the one true and living God as he has revealed himself in scripture. In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

CHAPTER 2

Civil Rulers & Idolatry - 2

SCRIPTURE READING - 2 Kings 23:1-7 (KJV)

Introduction and Review

And the king sent, and they gathered unto him all the elders of Judah and of Jerusalem. And the king went up into the house of the Lord, and all the men of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem with him, and the priests, and the prophets, and all the people, both small and great: and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant which was found in the house of the Lord. And the king stood by a pillar, and made a covenant before the Lord, to walk after the Lord, and to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes with all their heart and with all their soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people stood to the covenant.

And the king commanded Hilkiah the high priest, and the priests of the second order, and the keepers of the door, to bring forth out of the temple of the Lord all the vessels that were made for Baal, and for the grove, and for all the hosts of heaven. And he burned them without Jerusalem in the fields of Kidron,

and carried the ashes of them unto Bethel. And he put down the idolatrous priests whom the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense in the high places in the cities of Judah, and in the places round about Jerusalem, them also that burn incense unto Baal, to the sun and to the moon, to the planets, to all the hosts of heaven. And he brought out the grove from the house of the Lord, without Jerusalem, unto the brook Kidron, and burned it at the brook Kidron, and stamped it small to powder, and cast the powder thereof upon the graves of the children of the people. And he break down the houses of the Sodomites that were by the house of the Lord, where the women wove hangings for their grove.

SCRIPTURE READING - 2 Kings 23:8-15 (KJV)

2 Kings 23, verse 8, And he brought all the priests out of the cities of Judah, and defiled the high places, where the priests had burned incense from Geba to Beersheba, and break down the high places of the gates that were in the entering into the gate of the Joshua, the governor of the city, which were on a man's left hand at the gate of the city. Nevertheless, the priests of the high places came not up to the altar of the Lord in Jerusalem, but they did eat of the unleavened bread among their brethren.

And he defiled Topheth, which is in the valley of the children of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter to pass through the fire to Molech. And he took away the horses of the kings of Judah that they had given to the sun at the entering in of the house of the Lord at the chamber of Nathan-Melech, the chamberlain, who was in the suburbs and burned the chariots of the sun with fire. And the altars that were on the top of the upper chamber of Ahaz, which the kings of Judah had made, and the altars which Manasseh had made, and the two courts of the house of the Lord, did the king beat down and break them down from thence and cast the dust of them into the brook Kidron. And the high places that were before Jerusalem, which were on the right hand of the mount of corruption which Solomon, the king of Israel, had builded for Ashtoreth, the abomination of the Sidonians, and for Chemosh, the abomination of the Moabites, and for Milcom, the

abomination of the children of Ammon, did the king defile. And he break in pieces the images, and cut down the groves, and filled their places with the bones of men. Moreover, the altar which was at Bethel, and the high place which Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, had made, both that altar and the high place he break down. and burned the high place and stamped it small to powder and burned the grove.

Now, today we're covering the second part of civil rulers and idolatry. And let me just point out that this chapter is exceedingly rich in truth and there are many needed applications that should be made and could be made to our day and our time and our nation.

The Loss and Recovery of God's Law

For those who did not hear the message last week, I went through the first fifteen verses and showed how civil rulers were not only prone to idolatry but, according to the Bible, were the ones who led in idolatry. I gave the reasons why government is always prone to idolatry. But today we are going to take a different stance and show you something more positive, because here we have King Josiah.

King Josiah comes along in a time of what you and I would call abysmal ignorance. According to 2 Kings 22, verses 8–10, the law of God had been lost—unhappily, lost in the temple. It was found only as they were cleaning the trash and rubbish out of the temple. King Josiah had commanded the temple to be cleansed, and there the law was found.

The interesting thing is this: when you read Deuteronomy 17, verses 18 through 20, the law of God required the king to have his own personal copy of the law of God. The law was kept in the temple, but the king was required to have his own personal copy. He did not have one, since the law had been lost in the temple. Thus, God's law had been lost in the temple, in the house of God, and in government. For all practical purposes, the law of God had been lost.

Likewise, so it is in our country. The law of God has been lost in our churches and in our government. We who should be proclaiming the law of God are now ashamed of it. In fact, we despise it, deny it,

denigrate it, and denounce it. For all practical purposes, the law of God is lost in this country, in the churches, and in government, according to its importance, authority, validity, and application.

What we have become in this country is a generation of antinomians. Anti means against; nomos, law. An antinomian is someone who is against the law of God. Because of false, wicked, and fallacious hermeneutics, we have been taught in this generation that the law has been done away with, abrogated, nullified, and set aside, and that it has no authority and no application. In fact, you go to the average church and hear the preacher say, "We're not under law. We're under grace." Consequently, usually in that church and other churches, they have turned grace into disgrace.

We have never understood a simple principle of Scripture: the law and the gospel are not enemies. They are friends. They complement each other. It is true that God never gave the law as a means of justification. No one can be saved by keeping the law. God never intended the law to be used as a means of justification. However, it is a means to sanctification.

Someone says, "Oh, Brother Weaver, I take objection with that." Well, pray tell, how in the world can anyone be called sanctified when he is murdering, committing adultery, stealing, and coveting? Very obviously, he cannot.

Years ago, Lester Roloff preached a wonderful sermon on law and grace entitled "Dr. Law and Dr. Grace." In that sermon, he showed the relationship between law and grace. I have a copy of that sermon and have read it numerous times. However, unhappily for most Christians, even for most preachers, they do not believe the Old Testament has any practical value at all. They do not even believe it has any significance at all.

The truth of the matter is this: You cannot understand the New Testament without understanding the Old Testament. There is an old cliché: "The new is in the old concealed, and the old is in the new revealed." If you want to understand the New Testament, you have to understand the Old Testament. If you want to understand the Old Testament, you have to understand the New Testament. They go together. You cannot understand one without the other.

As you look at 2 Kings 22—not that we are going to do so right now—you will find that it was the reading of the law that put Josiah under conviction. When the law was found by the high priest, he gave it to the scribe. The scribe then took it to King Josiah and read the book of the law. When Josiah heard the law being read, the Bible says that he rent his clothes and said, "is us," because God's wrath and God's curse were upon us, upon this people, and upon this nation, because we had violated His law. So it was the reading of the law that put King Josiah under conviction. Why?

Scripture makes it exceedingly plain that without the law, sin is dead. That is what the Apostle Paul meant when he said, "I was alive once without the law. But when the law came," that is, when he saw it in its true application, "sin revived, and I died."

Romans 3:20 says, "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified." Salvation is not by keeping the law, and justification is not by keeping the law. "For by the law is the knowledge of sin." One of the benefits we receive from the law is that we find out what sin is. We discover sin in its reality, its awfulness, its wickedness, and its deserts.

First John 3:4 says, "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law." You cannot sin without violating God's law. What is sin? Sin is a violation of the law of God. If you tell me the law has been done away with, then basically you are telling me that sin has been done away with.

How can I say that? Listen to Romans 4:15: "Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression." You do away with the law, and you have done away with sin. It is only by the law that we know what sin is. When God says, "Thou shalt not," we know what sin is.

One of the greatest reasons that we no longer see deep conviction of sin and conversion of sinners in this country is that the law of God is not preached. Since sin is the transgression of the law, how in the world can sinners be converted if they do not even hear the demands of the law?

How can they be convicted? They do not know what the law demands. Moreover, how in the world can anyone truly be

converted? You know what the Bible says in Galatians 3:24: “Wherefore the law is our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ.” The law has to teach us something before we ever get to Christ. It has to teach us that we are sinners, that we cannot save ourselves, and that there is a great chasm between a holy God and a wicked man. It has to teach us that this chasm can only be crossed by a substitute, by someone who is perfect; and that someone is none other than Jesus Christ. So the law is our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. If you do away with the law, you do away with salvation. The Puritans had an old saying: “The sharp needle of the law must precede the scarlet thread of the gospel.” Those who have never been pricked and stuck by the needle of the law have never had the scarlet thread of the gospel in them either.

Josiah's Prophetic Background and Conversion

Now, I want you to see something about Josiah. Hold 2 Kings 23, but turn back in your Bibles to 1 Kings 13. Josiah was an individual concerning whom a prophecy was given. Beginning in verse 1, listen to what the Word of God says: “And, behold, there came a man of God out of Judah by the word of the Lord unto Bethel: and Jeroboam stood by the altar to burn incense.” The prophet of God cried against the altar, the false altar that Jeroboam had built, saying, “O altar, altar, thus saith the Lord; Behold, a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name; and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high places that burn incense upon thee, and men’s bones shall be burnt upon thee.” The prophet was saying that a child would be born.

He was going to be a king of the house of David. His name was going to be Josiah, and he was going to destroy and defile this wicked and false altar and the wicked and false religion that Jeroboam, the king of Israel, had initiated. Do you realize that this prophecy was given some 340 years before Josiah was ever born? That still did not negate the fact that Josiah must be convicted and converted just like any other sinner. And you know what God used to convert Josiah? The law of God. He used the law of God to convict him.

Civil rulers are not only prone to idolatry; over and over, they are the ones who introduce idolatry into the land. You have only to read this chapter, and you will find that. They usually introduce idolatry in the land for their own personal, political, and selfish motives. God has only created three institutions. He created the family, which is a ministry of education; He created the church, which is a ministry of grace; and He created civil government, which is a ministry of justice. Since God is the creator of each of these institutions, each of these institutions is answerable and accountable to Him. Just as God requires the family to be Christian, and just as God requires the church to be Christian, God also requires government to be Christian. Why? He is the One who ordained them. He is the One who instituted them. He is the One who set them up.

The Divine Institution of Civil Government

In Romans 13, God uses numerous words to describe the civil ruler. He is sometimes referred to as a power and sometimes as an ordinance. But as we read on down in Romans 13, especially in verse 4, the civil ruler is called a minister of God twice. He is also called a revenger once in verse 4, and then, when we get to verse 6, the civil ruler is called a minister of God again.

When, in Romans 13:4, the civil ruler is twice referred to as a minister of God, the word for minister there is the Greek word diakonos, and it is where we get our English word deacon. The word deacon literally means what?

Servant. That's what it means. So if God has instituted civil government to be his deacon, what does that mean? It means God has instituted civil government to be his servant. They are to obey him. They are answerable and accountable to him. He is the one that gives them the rules that places limitations and confines upon them. They must answer to Him. He's the Creator. He is the one that has ordained the institution of civil government.

Now, when you get to the word minister in verse 6, it is a different Greek word. There it is the Greek word leitourgos. It is where we get our English word what? Liturgy. And what is a liturgy? It is a public form of worship. So when you get to verse 6 then, government now is called God's public form of worship. When you go back to verse 4,

and the civil rulers there called the revenger of God, the word revenger is ekdikos in the Greek.

Ek is a preposition which means out of. Dikaios, righteousness. What is a revenger? It's one who exacts God's righteousness. Let me just spell it out for you. Here's why God created civil government. God created civil government as His ordinance to be His power. Why? That they might be His deacon, that they might be His public worship, and that they might exact His righteousness. Not man's, not theirs. And God requires government to be Christian Just like he does a church, just like he does a family.

False Profession vs. Genuine Faith

You're going to object and say, but now wait a minute, Brother Weaver. Hang on. I know many governments that are not Christian. They're not biblical. They're not godly. I understand that. I know plenty of people, plenty of families. I even know some churches that are not holy, biblical, godly, or Christian. But that does not mean that they are exempt from God's requirements. It just means they're in disobedience and rebellion to God and God will judge them. That's all it means. The only other objection that I can possibly think of, listen carefully, is that some people have swallowed the fallacious and ridiculous line that, well, we do have a Christian government. because we have professional Christian rulers in our government. Let me say this as politely as I can.

I am absolutely sick to death of hearing about the Christianity of those men and those women who live ungodly lives, who live contrary to the Word of God, and who are doing everything possible to destroy our country and bring us into absolute servitude. I'm tired of hearing that they're Christians. Recently, I saw an article, in fact, this last week, naming some of the greatest Christians in this century. The first two names of America's greatest Christians. First two names on the list. The first one was George W. Bush. And if he's a Christian, dear friend, I'm Elvis Presley reincarnated.

The second name was John Ashcroft, our former Attorney General. May I point out that this wonderful professing Christian Attorney General, John Ashcroft, is the same Attorney General who gave the order for the invasion, capture, and destruction of the

Baptist Temple in Indianapolis, Indiana. Something is wrong somewhere, folks. How can people profess to be Christian and act absolutely contrary to the Word of God? You know, it is absolutely amazing to me that we have the dumbest Christians in this country, more than in any other country. When I say dumbest, I mean we are dumb concerning the Word of God.

Do you realize that, if you want to know who a real Christian is, you do not necessarily listen to what he says? You watch his life. You know what our Lord said? Our Lord said in Matthew 7:16, “Ye shall know them by their fruits.” Then He repeated the same truth in Matthew 7:20: “Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.” He said a fig tree cannot bring forth apples or oranges, and a bitter fountain cannot bring forth sweet water. Very obviously not. You have to be either biblical or unbiblical. You are going to do what is right, or you are going to do what is wrong. It is that simple.

The Bible says here that King Saul turned back from following the Lord. How do we know that King Saul turned back from following the Lord? What is the evidence? You say, “Well, Brother Weaver, we know he turned back because God said so.” That is true. But God also tells us how we may know that he turned back. In 1 Samuel 15:11, God says, “It repented me that I have set up Saul to be king, for he has turned back from following me,” and here it is, “and hath not performed my commandments.” How do we know that King Saul had turned back, had apostatized from the faith, from following the one true and the living God?

The answer is very simple. He did not keep God's commandments. He did not obey God. He did not listen to God. Do you realize that keeping God's commandments is truly evidence as to whether or not we are really and truly genuine Christians? And that is true for a civil ruler or for an ordinary individual.

Our Lord said in John 14:21, “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me.” That is pretty simple, is it not? When you get down to verse 24, He says, “He that keepeth not my commandments loveth me not.” Now, that is very difficult to figure out, is it not? If I keep His commandments, I love Him. If I do not keep His commandments, I do not love Him. That is very deep, is it not? That is hard to grasp. Let us be a little plainer.

First John 2:3 says, “Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.” How do I know that I know God? Because my life is being brought into conformity to His Word. It may not be in absolute perfection, but it means there is a constant and continual bringing of my life into conformity to His Word. Again, “Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.”

Now look at verse 4: “He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.” I did not write that. He that says, “I know Him,” and keeps not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

I do not care if it is the President of the United States. I do not care if it is the Attorney General. I do not care if it is the King or Queen of England. If you profess to know God, but you live a life of constant disobedience, God says you are a liar, and the truth is not in you.

In 1 John 5:3, the Bible says, “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.” What is the love of God? How do I know that I love God? It does not grieve me that I cannot run around with every woman in this country; I do not want to run around with every woman in this country. It does not grieve me that I cannot steal; I do not want to steal. I do not want to go out and break God's law.

God's law is for our benefit and our blessing. How do I know that I love God? Because I am not grieved when He says, Here is what you should do, and here is what you should not do.

What does He say in 1 John 2:4? “He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.” He says that this is the love of God: that we keep His commandments, and His commandments are not grievous. Let the Hollywood movie stars, the politicians, and the easy-believism, carnal Christians think on these verses for a while. The only conclusion is that either God is right or they are right; either God is wrong or they are wrong. God is right, and they are wrong.

We are so easily bamboozled in this country. Look at what our rulers are doing, in whichever department you choose. Ninety-nine

percent of it is not only contrary to Scripture; it is even contrary to our Constitution.

Josiah's Godly Actions as a Ruler

King Josiah, in 2 Kings chapter 23, demonstrates how a real Christian ruler will act. Based on 2 Kings 22, when Josiah heard the word of God, he believed it, repented of his sins, and sought the Lord. Once King Josiah got his personal, private life in order, he began to deal with the problems in his kingdom. There is a principle here: we have to get our own lives in order before we can help others. He got his own life in order, and then he began to do so.

Here is the first point: Josiah made known the Word of God to his cabinet, his princes, his priests, and his people.

Look in verse 1 of chapter 23: "And the king sent, and they gathered in him all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem. And the king went up into the house of the Lord, and all the men of Judah, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem with him, and the priests, and the prophets, and all the people, both small and great. And he, the king, read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant, which was found in the house of the Lord."

Now, let me put it very plainly. Josiah did not believe in keeping his faith a secret. He did not believe that religion has no place in government. You must remember a simple truth: all government is religious. Government is a theological issue because God ordained it. It has a relationship to God. It is absolutely impossible to have a separation between government and religion. It is impossible.

The Religious and Covenantal Nature of Government

You may not have a state church like the Anglican churches in England. You do not have to have the Baptist Church as the official church of the United States of America, or the Presbyterian Church, or the Methodist Church. I am not talking about churches; I am simply talking about religion. All government is religious because government deals with right and wrong, good and evil, justice and injustice. It may have reference to the Christian religion, some pagan religion, or some humanistic religion, but it is still religious.

You cannot escape that fact. Every time lawmakers look at a law and say, “I think that is a good law,” or, “I think that is a bad law,” they are determining good and bad based upon their own preconceived ideas— their own religion. If they are Muslim, they are following the Muslim religion. If they are Christian, they are following the Christian religion. If they are Wiccan, they are following the Wiccan religion. All government is religious. It may not be specifically Christian, but it will be humanistic.

The only reason Christianity is denied, denigrated, and denounced in governmental circles is to make way for another religion, a one world religion. You cannot be biblical and unbiblical at the same time; you are one of the other. You cannot be Christian and pagan at the same time; you are one of the other. You cannot be a believer and an unbeliever at the same time; you are one of the other. Josiah was decidedly Christian, and he demonstrated it in his actions.

He was not ashamed to get his cabinet, princes, and leaders together and say, “Let me tell you something. God has dealt with my heart, and I want to read to you what God has shown me.” The problem in recent years is that many presidents and politicians have given lip service to Christianity, but in their actions they have denied Christ and the true faith. Let me give you an illustration.

When Jimmy Carter was running for president of the United States, he had an interview with Playboy magazine. In that interview, Jimmy Carter confessed that he had lusted in his heart. I remember people becoming upset that he had confessed this. That did not upset me. Why? Because I know what lust is, and you know what lust is, and every one of us has lusted after something in our lives. I understand sin.

What bothered me did not bother the average Christian. In that same interview, Jimmy Carter professed to be a Christian, but he said that if he was elected president of the United States of America, he would not allow his Christianity to interfere. He kept that promise, because he and all who followed him have been pagan and anti-Christian to the core in everything that they have done.

Now, let me put it to you the way God does: It is impossible to be a true believer and not show it. David said in Psalm 116, verse 10, "I believed, and therefore have I spoken." Whatever is genuinely in you, what you truly believe, is going to come out. It will come out.

Everywhere I go, just about, I can talk for a few minutes and someone will say, "You're a preacher, aren't you?" "Well, yes, but how do you know that?" "I just know." It is not the way I talk or the words that I use. The fact is, if Christianity and its principles are in you, they are going to come out.

Jeremiah, because of the oppression and tyranny he was undergoing, decided he was not going to preach anymore. In Jeremiah 20:9 he said, "Then said I, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name." Then he added, "But his word was in me as a burning fire that was shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay." At least, he could not help but tell people about the one true and living God. He could not hold it in.

If the truth is in you, it will come out. If the truth does not come out, it is because it is not in you. Josiah got all these people together and told them what God had done for him, how God had convicted and converted him, and that he wanted them to hear the same thing.

Josiah publicly entered into a covenant to honor and obey the Lord. In 2 Kings 23:3, the king stood by a pillar and made a covenant before the Lord to walk after the Lord, to keep His commandments, testimonies, and statutes with all their heart and soul, and to perform the words of the covenant written in the book. All the people stood to the covenant. He not only entered into a covenant but took the lead in doing so. The people and the princes were so impressed that they, too, entered into that covenant with him.

Naturally, you would think his cabinet leaders followed suit. Here was a man mighty serious about obeying God. By publicly entering into a covenant, he was telling everybody, "You can hold me accountable. Remember what I am telling you. I am giving myself to obey the Lord." When the people did the same thing, they bound themselves publicly to obedience. Talk is cheap, but when you

publicly bind yourself to a covenant and everyone knows it, they will hold you accountable. They know that you are serious.

King Hezekiah did the same thing in 2 Chronicles 29:10. He did so in a day like Josiah's: a day of perversity, idolatry, and ignorance. When King Hezekiah and King Josiah publicly entered into the covenant and the people joined themselves in obedience, there were two great revivals in the land.

You must remember that government is a religious issue and a theological issue. All government is religious. It may be pagan or it may be Christian, but it is still religious. All government is covenantal. Look in 2 Kings 11:17. There are many passages I could use, but I will not take time to develop this today; you can read about it in the second chapter of my book on the covenantal nature of government, *The Christian and Civil Government*. Let me point out the covenantal nature of government.

Jehoiada, who was the high priest, made a covenant between the Lord and the king and the people, that they should be the Lord's people, and also between the king and the people.

There are two different covenants mentioned here. The first covenant is between the Lord, the king, and the people. In that covenant, the king agrees to be God's ruler, and the people agree to be God's people. In the second covenant, between the king and the people, the king agrees to rule faithfully, and the people agree to obey him as long as he does.

Whether you go to the Old Testament, the New Testament, or come to the twenty-first century, government is still religious and government is still covenantal. Even in our United States of America, government is a covenantal issue. The covenant that we have with the federal government is called the Constitution of the United States of America. In that covenant, the federal government agrees to be limited, defined, and confined to the powers granted to it by the states. The states agree to cease and desist from certain powers that they granted to the federal government. What happened to all the other powers and rights? According to the Ninth and Tenth Amendments, those other powers and rights are reserved to the states or to we, the people, respectively. In other words, the only

power the federal government has is what the states gave it. All the other power remains in the states or with the people. You cannot escape covenants. You cannot escape the covenantal nature of government.

There is nothing wrong with a president, a king, or a civil ruler publicly stating that he is a Christian, that he wants to honor the Lord, and that he will send her to a covenant to obey the Lord, asking his cabinet and the people of the land to join with him. There is nothing wrong with that—nothing unbiblical and nothing unconstitutional.

I only wish our leaders would have the courage to do so. Think about the alternative. If our leaders do not act according to Scripture, then they are declaring themselves to be in opposition to Christ and set on the overthrow of Christianity. You say, Brother Weaver, how can you make such a statement? Do you remember what our Lord said in Matthew 12 and verse 30? Are you listening?

"He that is not with me is what? Against me, and he that gathers not scatters abroad." In other words, there is no middle ground and no neutrality. You are either for Christ or against Christ; you are either for Christianity or against Christianity. Jesus Christ does not condone, approve, support, or fellowship with wicked, evil civil governments.

Why do you suppose our government and our judicial officers are doing everything they can to take down the Ten Commandments and destroy Christianity wherever they turn? It is in order that they may establish their politically correct humanistic religion. Who orders the Ten Commandments removed? Who orders prayer to cease in public schools or at football games? Government. And why do they do that? Because they are against Christ and against Christianity. It is just that simple.

Josiah said, "No, I am not against Christ. I am not against Christianity. In fact, I am willing to come out and publicly state that I am for Christ and for Christianity." There is nothing wrong with that.

Thirdly, understand this: Josiah destroyed and put down all foreign and idolatrous religions. If you read from verse 4 through

verse 15, what was he doing? He was tearing down Molech worship, the worship of Chemosh, the worship of Ashtoreth, and the worship of Baal. Anything that was foreign to the land, he was destroying. He was saying, "No, no, those religions are foreign to our way of thinking. They are idolatry, and we are not going to have them in our land."

I can hear the screams from liberals and bleeding hearts, especially from the ACLU: "Civil rulers cannot do that. All religions are equal, and all have a right to exist. We must protect all religions." Well, why do they not apply that to Christianity? Every pagan, false, and humanistic religion in this country takes precedence over Christianity. Every religion is protected except Christianity. It appears that there is open season for ridicule, oppression, and persecution of Christians and Christianity in this country. It appears to be politically correct to attack Christians.

But when you begin to talk about Islam, Judaism, or some other cult, you are blackballed. You are called a racist, a fascist, or wicked.

Now let me simply point out the fact that, since the Bible teaches that civil rulers are to be God's deacons, they must serve Him. Since civil rulers are to be God's exactors of righteousness, they must exact His righteousness. Since civil rulers will be His public worship, they must publicly worship Him. God created them; God made the institution. They are accountable to Him.

Do you realize that, in this country when it began, Christianity was promoted and protected by the civil rulers? In fact, you could not hold office in this country unless you were a Christian, period. Let me give you several illustrations. The 1683 Constitution for the Province of New Jersey, paragraph 16, says: "Yet it is also hereby provided that no man shall be admitted a member of the great or common council, or any other place of public trust, who shall not profess faith in Jesus Christ." Thus, in New Jersey in 1683, you had to profess faith in Christ to hold office.

The Charter of Delaware, 1701, says that all persons who profess to believe in Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world, shall be capable, both legislatively and executively, to serve this government in any capacity. The Constitution of Delaware, 1776, Article 22, says this.

Here is the oath they had to take: “I, [name], do profess faith in God the Father, and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, and in the Holy Ghost, one God, blessed forevermore. And I do acknowledge the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be given by divine inspiration.”

It did not say he had to be a Baptist or a Presbyterian, but it did say he had to be a Christian. Here is the Georgia Constitution of 1777, Article 6: “The representative shall be chosen out of the resident in each county, who shall have resided at least twelve months in this state, and they shall be of the Protestant religion and of age twenty-one years of age.”

He could not be a Catholic or a Jew; he had to be a believer. Here is the Constitution of Vermont, 1777, chapter 2, section 9. This was the oath the Vermonters had to take in order to assume office: “I do believe in one God, the creator and governor of the universe, the rewarder of the good and punisher of the wicked. And I do acknowledge the scripture of the Old and New Testaments to be given by divine inspiration.” They also had to say, “And I own and profess the Protestant religion.” What will they say? You had to be a Christian to hold office in this country.

Now, you say, “Brother Weaver, in our day and time, it might be a little difficult for some to promote Christianity.” Well, isn’t that something? Let me ask you a question. If it might be difficult for some in our day and time to promote Christianity, one thing is for sure: the civil ruler is not bound to promote any false religion. And yet, for the life of me, I cannot figure out how our Congress and our politicians always find ways to do so.

Modern Examples of Governmental Apostasy

Let me read you something you probably never heard about. I heard about it when it happened. Shocking? Oh, yes. This is a rather lengthy article, “Hail to the Moon King.” Did you know that in the Congress of the United States, our congressman crowned a man king and hailed him as Prince of Peace? It happened in 2004. Let me read it to you: “Hail to the Moon King.”

The deeply weird coronation of the Reverend Sun Myung Moon—in a Senate office building, with crown, robes, and works—is no longer one of Washington's best-kept secrets. John Gorenfeld wrote this:

You probably imagine your congressman hard at work in the Capitol debating legislation, making laws, and governing. But your newspaper probably did not tell you that, one night in March 2004, members of Congress hosted a crowning ritual for an ex-convict and multibillionaire who dressed up in maroon robes and declared himself the Second Coming.

On March 23, the Dirksen Senate Office Building was the scene of a coronation ceremony for the Reverend Sun Myung Moon, owner of the conservative Washington Times newspaper and UPI wire service. Representative Danny K. Davis, Democrat of Illinois, gave Moon a bejeweled crown. Afterwards, Moon told his bipartisan audience of Washington power brokers that he would save everyone on earth, as he had saved the souls of Hitler and Stalin. The murderous dictators had been born again through him, he said. In a vision, Moon said he reformed Hitler and Stalin, vouched for himself, calling himself none other than humanity's savior, messiah, returning lord, and true parent.

To many observers, this bizarre scene would have looked like the apocalypse depicted in Left Behind novels. Moon, 84, the benefactor of conservative foundations like the American Family Coalition, who served time in the 1980s for tax fraud and conspiracy to obstruct justice, has views somewhere to the right of the Taliban's Mullah Omar. Moon preaches that gays are dung-eating dogs, that Jews brought on the Holocaust by betraying Jesus, and that the United States Constitution should be scrapped in favor of a system he calls Godism, with him in charge.

The man crowned King of Peace by a congressman once said, according to sermons reprinted in his church's Unification News, "Suppose I were to hit you with a baseball bat to stop you, blooding your ear and breaking a bone or two, yet still you insisted on doing more work for Father, that is for himself." What exactly drew to Moon's coronation? By the Unification Church's estimate, 81 congressmen attended. The event was the grand finale of Moon's

coast-to-coast tear-down-the-cross moonification tour, intended to remove Christian crosses from about 300 churches in poor neighborhoods, because the cross was an obstacle to uniting religions under Moon. Yet the Dirksen ceremony was sold as a celebration for world peace. A promotional release called it “the dawn of the era of the eternal peace kingdom, one global family under God.” Moon’s coronation also cured God’s pain, the announcer explained. It might almost make sense for conservative congressmen to honor Moon in this way.

A writer in Moon's magazine, Insight, wrote in February that it was long past time for Republicans to thank the billionaire Korean preacher for his gifts. The continued refusal of Beltway conservatives publicly to acknowledge their steadfast patron is, of course, scandalous, wrote contributor Paul Gottfried. Moon has sunk an estimated two to four billion dollars into the money-losing Times and countless other causes, such as Jerry Falwell's Liberty University. Members of Congress may want to do their homework before they crown their next King of Peace. Pictures showed Moon and his wife standing in maroon robes with jeweled crowns on their heads as they crowned him the Prince of Peace. Why are our leaders willing to recognize a pagan and a foreigner as the Prince of Peace, but unable to acknowledge the true Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ?

Neither the Senate nor Congress can crown Jesus Christ Prince of Peace. God the Father has already made Him so. They may recognize Him as Prince of Peace, but they cannot crown Him as Prince of Peace. A truly converted civil ruler, however, will find ways to exalt Jesus Christ and put down foreign idolatry. A truly converted Christian ruler would do everything he could to bring this nation back to the one true and living God through Jesus Christ.

Fifthly, Josiah put down immorality in any and every form. You can read about that in 2 Kings 23:7. He put down the Sodomites. In verse 9, he put down the other false authors and, of course, the worship of the grove or Ashtoreth. No kingdom or country can stand while immorality is rampant and is the norm. Whenever adultery, fornication, and especially sodomy are rampant in a country, society is in its death throes.

Jeremiah 5 shows this truth. God asks, “How shall I pardon thee for this? Thy children have forsaken me, and sworn by them that are no gods.” He continues, “When I have fed them to the full, then they committed adultery and assembled themselves by troops in the harlot's houses. They were as fed horses in the morning, and everyone neighed after his neighbor's wife.”

Now look what God says: “...shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord, and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?” When fornication, adultery, and sodomy are rampant, what is God saying? How can I pardon you for this? I will punish you. I will execute vengeance upon you. Yet all across this country you hear, “The sodomites and the fornicators have a right to live their life the way they please.”

No one has the right to violate the law of God. You may do so, but it is not a right. It is revolt, rebellion, wickedness, transgression, and sin. You say, “If I want to commit adultery, I will commit adultery. If I want to commit fornication, I will commit fornication. If I want to be a Solomon, I will be a Solomon. That’s my rights.”

Let me ask you a question: If you have the right to violate the seventh and the tenth commandment, do I have the right to violate the sixth toward you? You know what the sixth commandment is: “Thou shalt not kill.” If you claim the right to commit adultery and to be a sodomite, why cannot I claim the same right to violate God’s law and simply shoot you? It is not a right; it is rebellion and wickedness. No one has the right to violate the law of God, regardless of who he is or what he is doing. Claiming such a right mocks God and claims a right to rebel and set oneself above Him.

Where do you think people get the idea that they have a right to live as they please? Look in your Bibles to Psalm 94:20. I pointed out earlier that Jesus Christ does not condone, approve, support, or fellowship with wicked, ungodly civil governments. Here it is in black and white: “shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee, that is with God, which frameth mischief by a law.” Now let us stop and look at that. We are talking about a throne, power, and civil government. It is a throne of iniquity, therefore a wicked civil government. Here is the question: Shall a wicked civil government

have fellowship with God when that wicked civil government frames mischief by law?

Mischief in the Bible is another word for sin. Let me paraphrase this so you can understand it: Shall a wicked civil government have fellowship with God when that wicked civil government makes sin legal?

It is legal to be a sodomite in this country. It is now legal to be an adulterer and a fornicator. There used to be such a thing in this country as alienation of affection. If you came around messing with my wife, trying to take her away from me, I could sue you for alienation of affection; and if you messed with her, I could shoot you. There would not have been a jury in this country to convict me at that time. But Alice and I heard a United States attorney—or perhaps it was a state attorney—say to one man that, merely because his friend had committed adultery with his wife, he did not have the right to whip that boy. I leaned over and said to my wife, "No, he did not have the right to whip him. I just shot him."

You understand what I am saying? Nothing Christian is sacred anymore. The family is not sacred. The husband-and-wife relationship is not sacred. What has happened in this country is that we have dethroned God and enthroned government. It is no longer God who declares what sin is; it is government. It is no longer God who declares what is right and wrong; it is government. So, if you want to be a sodomite in this country, go ahead. You have the government's blessing. You can probably get a lot of subsidies if you know the right congressman to talk to and the right clubs to join.

God defines sin, and God tells you what is right and wrong. Governments that want to play God try to usurp His throne. When a people or a nation wishes to continue a life of rebellion against God, Scripture tells us that God hides His face. He withholds His grace, His blessings, and His favors. Then He says in Deuteronomy 32:20, "I will hide My face from them."

I will see what their end will be. When God hides His face, I know what our end will be: we shall perish in destruction.

Government, listen carefully. Government may not have the power to make men do right, but it does have the power to declare

what is right. I get so sick of people saying, “Brother Weaver, don’t you know government cannot legislate morality?” Government legislates morality every day. It may not be Christian morality; it may be pagan or humanistic, but government legislates morality or immorality. Government does not have the power to make people do right, but it can have power to declare what is right.

Josiah was willing to do that. He was willing to call sin, sin; transgression, transgression; and wickedness, wickedness. But in this politically correct environment, when you call sin sin and point out wickedness, you are labeled unloving, unkind, unchristian, a fascist, and anything else. The politically correct crowd wants to sugarcoat sin and rebellion and call them by every unoffending name they can.

Picture myself as President of the United States. How long do you think I would last? Let me show you the absolute compromise and stupidity of our politicians. This just happened. Lester Kinsolving wrote about it, and I got it out of WorldNetDaily. It has been all over the news.

You know about the chaplain who was being court-martialed and disciplined because, in Washington and in uniform, he prayed in Jesus’ name. President Bush believed military chaplains should be allowed to express their religious beliefs, but he would also allow the military to handle its own dispute over that issue, according to his spokesman, Tony Snow. In a face-to-face interview with WorldNetDaily, Snow was asked whether the president believed Christian chaplains, in view of the constitutional guarantee of freedom of religion, should be able to express their faith even at the White House. “The president believes that chaplains ought to be free to express their religious beliefs,” Snow said. He further believed in allowing the military to handle its own issues.

The commander-in-chief, who professes to be a Christian, could not say that in our army chaplains can pray in Jesus’ name. Muslim chaplains pray in Allah’s name. Why cannot Christian chaplains pray in Jesus’ name? Why is it a crime, and why will a Christian chaplain be court-martialed and disciplined because he asked in Jesus’ name?

Is it right or wrong to pray in Jesus' name? It is right. What did our Lord say in John 14:6? "I am the way, the truth, and the life, and no man cometh in the Father but by me." Ephesians 2:18 says that through Him we have access to the Father in one spirit. President Bush had the excellent opportunity to stand up and say, "The Constitution says freedom of religion. Our chaplains can pray in Jesus' name," but he would not, and he did not. You know why?

He did not want to offend all those other people, but he offended God and every true believer in Jesus Christ. Would to God we had men like Josiah and Hezekiah in Congress today.

Let me make just two applications, before someone jumps down my throat. First, I understand that there are limitations upon government, placed there first by the Word of God and secondly by the Constitution. However, in our day and age, in this country, in 2006, our government has not only left the Word of God; it has also left the Constitution. It has assumed powers never delegated by the states or by the people. You must understand that it is impossible for government to be neutral or unbiased. Government will either be Christian or pagan. It will promote Christianity or humanism. That is it, because government is theological in nature.

Applications and Call to Action

What you see in 2006 and the years preceding this is that, as our government has disestablished Christianity as the established religion in this country, it is establishing its own brand of humanism and political correctness as the religion and law of the land. In order to do that, it must destroy Christianity. That is why there are all these rulings against the Ten Commandments and against prayer.

Here is the second one: We must seek, pray for, and support men with character and convictions who are going to put Christ first and America second in every area. I know someone is going to object and say, "But now wait a minute, a Christian cannot do anything in Washington today." I am going to tell you that is patently untrue. One thing a Christian can do is stand.

He can be a thorn in their side, a finger in their eyeball. He can expose their wickedness, sin, and corruption, and do right to the best

of his ability. He may not get reelected, and he may not be elected Congressman of the Year, but he would have the approval of Jesus Christ and every true Christian who wanted someone to at least stand up to the renegades and rebels, shake the finger in their face, and say, “You are wrong, and God will judge you.”

That is what he can do. If elected, that would be one promise that I would keep. I would love to be able to point that long, bony finger and say, “God says, and you had better listen to Him.” Government is a theological issue. Josiah shows us what a godly civil ruler could do and can do by the grace of God. That is what we need: someone who will put the Lord absolutely first. Let us pray.

Father, help us today to live for Thee, honor Thee, and glorify Thy Name. Give us, Lord, men like Josiah and Hezekiah, and grant us, Lord, that we will stand by them, stand with them, and do what is right for God's honor and glory. In Jesus' name we ask, Amen.

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