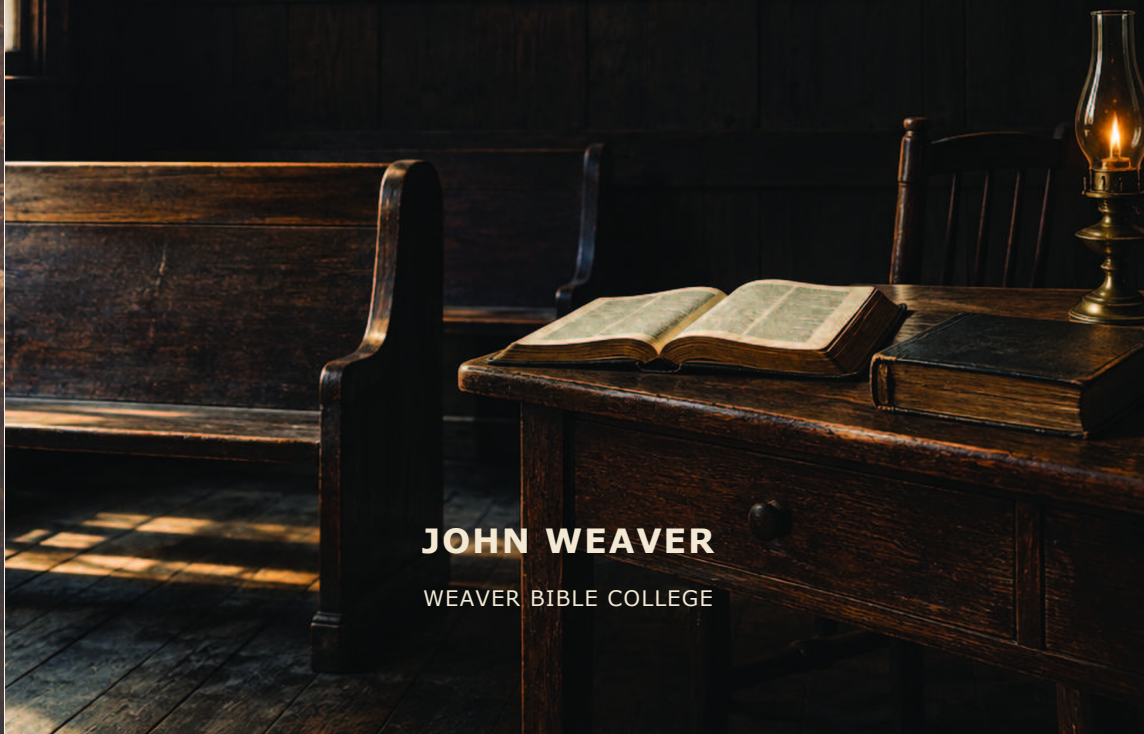
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BIBLICAL STUDIES

The Church & Incorporation

"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

PSALM 119:105



JOHN WEAVER

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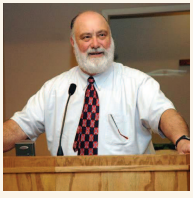
And he is the head of the body, the church.

COLOSSIANS 1:18, EXCERPT

The organization of a church raises questions about authority and allegiance. John Weaver considers incorporation, civil recognition, and the responsibilities of a congregation under Christ. These messages invite careful examination of institutional arrangements in the light of Scripture, asking what obligations are accepted and how church authority is understood.

“It all comes back to this question: Who is the head of the church?”

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

The Church & Incorporation - 1

Introduction: The Question of Headship

I am going to be preaching an unusual message for me today because I normally preach expository, and this is not going to be an expository message. Most of you are probably aware of some of the issues that I am going to touch upon today, but I want to develop them thoroughly. I want to deal with the church and incorporation. I am going to show you what has happened to our churches in this country, and one of the reasons why we are in the mess that we are in.

In Ephesians chapter 1, this is talking about the greatness of God's power in Christ when He raised Him from the dead. Beginning with verse 19: "And what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to

come. And hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all."

Verse 22 says: "And hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him," that is Christ, "to be the head over all things to the church."

Ephesians 4:15 says: "But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, who is the head, even Christ." Once again, Christ is the head. Ephesians 5:23 says: "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church, and He is the Savior of the body." Colossians 1:18 says: "And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He might have the preeminence." Note that the Scripture says Christ is the head of the church.

Look in Colossians 2 and verse 10. In fact, let us begin with verse 9: “For in Him,” that is, in Christ, “dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and you are complete in Him who is the head of all principality and power.” Christ, then, is the head of all principality and power.

Now let me ask you a question: Is Jesus Christ the head of your church, or is the civil government the head of your church? Who actually runs the churches in this country? Is it Jesus Christ, or is it the civil government? Who has ultimate say, ultimate authority, or ultimate jurisdiction over your church? Is it Christ, or is it the government?

The answer depends on whether or not your church is an incorporated church and a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt-status church. The painful truth that most people have never come to realize is that there are state churches in this country. There are governmental churches, state preachers, and governmental preachers. Some churches are politically correct and officially recognized and sanctioned by the government. Others are not politically correct, recognized, or sanctioned by the government. The same is true of preachers: some are politically correct, recognized, and sanctioned by the government, while others are not.

Historical Baptist Opposition to Incorporation

This issue of incorporation is not recent; it has been around for a long time. Isaac Backus was a famous Baptist preacher in the 1780s and 1790s and is referred to as the elder statesman of the Baptists. There were particular pushes in the 1700s to incorporate the churches. Listen carefully as I read from the life of Isaac Backus: "The obvious reason for incorporation was to comply with the decision in the Cutter case," a previous court decision, "and thus be sure that religious taxes paid by Baptists would be returned to their own ministers by parish or town treasurers."

Especially in the New England states, everybody paid religious taxes. Those taxes usually supported the state church, which at that time would have been a Congregational, Puritan, or Pilgrim church. The Baptists were distinct from that, and they, along with many others, objected: "It's not right that we have to pay taxes to support other people in their religious beliefs when we don't even agree with them." They were told, "If you will incorporate, if you will become a state-recognized church, then we will return your religious taxes back to you."

For some Baptists, a more compelling reason was to enable a congregation to make binding contracts between its members and its pastors, thereby guaranteeing regular payment of a decent salary. Backus had often criticized his brethren for covetousness in failing to give adequate voluntary support to their pastors. But he could never regard the relationship between a pastor and his flock as a purely civil contract enforceable by law. He viewed the relationship at all levels as purely spiritual. To use the state to collect salaries was as wrong for the Baptists as for the Congregationalists.

Backus also believed that incorporation acknowledged the right of the state to decide which churches could and could not be chartered. In addition, incorporation gave all persons in the congregation the right to vote on building or repairing the meetinghouse, as well as paying the minister's salary. The unconverted members might then be able to outvote the converted, thereby allowing the worldlings more power over the saints.

One church that wanted to incorporate asked the Warren Association, an association of Baptists, in 1791 whether it should do so. The decision of the Warren Association was: "That it be earnestly committed to the churches belonging to this association that by no means they are to apply to civil government for incorporation, because we cannot consent to blend the kingdom of Christ with the kingdom of this world, nor to support it by the power of the civil magistrates." Even in the 1790s, they understood that incorporating a church gave the state authority over it and gave the worldlings power over the body of Christ.

There was another court case in 1810, Barnes versus the First Parish of Falmouth. Barnes, in Falmouth, Massachusetts, was insisting that religious organizations incorporate in accordance with state laws if they wanted to receive and enjoy the benefits made available by the states.

Several truths must be understood about this case. First, a church is not a religious organization. A church is a church. In fact, from our own modern day, you can see that a church is separate and distinct from a religious organization. Second, Barnes was attempting to force state incorporation upon Baptists who believed that incorporation was an unchristian surrender to the state. Third, evidently, Barnes lived in a jurisdiction that believed the church was established by the state. Fourth, such a forcing of a governmentally chosen form upon religious activity is incompatible with the freedom of religious clauses even in the state constitutions. Therefore, this business about incorporation is not merely something that has come up recently; it has been fought since the 1700s.

What is the problem with incorporation? Why is incorporation such an issue? Incorporation is a denial of the Lordship of Jesus Christ. It all comes back to this question: Who is the head of the church? Is it Jesus Christ, or is it the state? That is the central issue in incorporation, because the answer determines whether the church is under the authority of Christ or under the authority of the state.

The word "incorporation" basically means "the body continues." In the truest sense of the word, the church of Jesus Christ is the only true corporation. You understand that on the spiritual level, because the body of Christ will continue forever. So, in reality, the church is

the only true corporation. Yet there is a vast difference between our Lord's heavenly incorporation, where His body continues, and that which is known as state incorporation. One is the continuing body of Christ; the other concerns a relationship established by the state.

The Legal Nature of a Corporation

Al Cunningham, a constitutional attorney who lives in California, drew up several distinctions concerning the relationship between the corporation and the state. First, the corporation is created by the state. That is very important: the corporation is created by the state; it is a creature of the state. Second, the corporation is sanctified by the state. Third, the corporation is empowered and energized by the state. Fourth, the corporation is subject to the state in all things. These distinctions describe the corporation's relationship to the state: its existence, recognition, power, and submission all come from the state.

If our church were named Freedom Baptist Church, Inc.—Freedom Baptist Church Incorporated—that would mean Freedom Baptist Church was subject to the state in all things. Here are the attributes of a corporation.

First, the corporation is an artificial person. It is not a real flesh-and-blood person like you and I are. Since it is an artificial person, no protections are given by the Constitution to an artificial person. If our church were Freedom Baptist Church, Inc., and the state attacked us while we claimed our constitutional rights, we would have none.

Second, the corporation is a citizen of the state of incorporation for determining jurisdiction, both state and federal. Whenever the state incorporates a corporation, that corporation is a citizen of the state, and jurisdiction is therefore determined both statewide and federally.

Third, the corporation has an existence distinct, separate, and apart from its members. If our church were incorporated, someone could sue the incorporation without suing any of us, because it is separate and distinct. Many people say that is an advantage, but you will find it is probably a disadvantage a little later.

Fourth, except when restricted by statute, the corporation has unlimited existence. It is unaffected by changes in personnel, members, directors, and officers. Fifth, the members of the corporation are not the owners of the corporate property. Suppose we spent $50,000 buying this property and then incorporated it. We would not own the property; the corporation would. You will understand why that is important a little later.

All the powers of the corporation are exercised by and under the authority of a board of directors. Board members have no individual power apart from the board as a whole. If we are incorporated, not only is Jesus Christ not the head of the church—the state is—but the pastor is not even the under-shepherd or the head under Christ, as the Word of God declares. The board would be in control under the state, not the pastor.

The members of the corporation have no direct control over its affairs. Only the board takes care of that. All the bylaws drawn up by the corporation, which control the corporation, are statutes made by the state.

A corporation is basically something that glorifies man in all things. A corporation is an artificial person created by the state according to state statute and state constitution. It has an existence separate, distinct, and apart from its members. It is founded, organized, and energized by statutory authority and controlled by a board of directors elected by its members. The directors exercise only such powers as are conferred upon the board by statute, bylaws, and articles of incorporation. The head of the corporation is a board in submission to state law. Very obviously, then, the state controls the corporation.

Let me begin making applications and demonstrate what I mean by all this. Many of you will remember that, a number of years ago in the 1980s, there was a pastor named Everett Sullivan in Nebraska. His church was the first church padlocked in the United States. It was padlocked by the government. Why was it padlocked? Because they had a Christian school.

Case Studies: The Consequences of Incorporation

The state came in and said, “We’re going to license and certify your teachers, and we’re going to tell you what kind of curriculum you can use.” Everett said, “No, you’re not.” They closed that church and ministry, padlocked the church, and refused to let them enter for preaching. I had a number of pastor friends there when they came to padlock it. Over 200 pastors were kneeling in that church praying. State troopers, sheriff’s deputies, and police officers came and bodily carried those pastors out, dropped them on the ground, and padlocked the church.

They threw Everett and some of his men in prison. Here is what happened.

Judge Raymond Chase asked the sheriff to bring Everett out of his cell about ten o’clock one night for a private meeting. Everett came into the judge’s chambers, and the judge asked him to begin with prayer. Everett prayed. Everett said, “He”—that is, the judge—“first began by asking me to close the school. When I refused, he asked if I would move it outside of his jurisdiction, or just get it out of my jurisdiction. Again, I refused.”

“He then made a statement that got my attention. He said, ‘Pastor, you’re ninety-five percent right in your arguments, but you’re five percent wrong.’ I responded, ‘If you can point out where I’m wrong, I will repent and make changes.’ He pulled from the file the pleadings that had been filed and asked me to read the heading. I read, ‘The State of Nebraska et al.,’ that is, and others, ‘Attorney General Paul Douglas versus the Faith Baptist Church, a Nebraska corporation.’ He stopped me and said, ‘Would you read those last few words again?’ I read them again: ‘Faith Baptist Church, a Nebraska corporation.’ He asked, ‘Is that a heavenly corporation?’ I replied, ‘No.’ He asked again, ‘Is that an angelic corporation?’ I replied, ‘No.’ He asked a third time, ‘Well, what kind of corporation is that?’ I responded, ‘According to the heading, it is a Nebraska corporation.’ Then he asked, ‘Pastor, who owns your buildings?’ I answered, ‘The Faith Baptist…’ I’m beginning to see the light.”

“The corporation owns the property.” The judge responded, “And who owns the corporation?” I said, “Nebraska.” He said, “That’s

right." He explained that he had been told to padlock my church again, and that this was the most terrible thing he could do, since the leaders in Lincoln, Nebraska, had requested that he bulldoze it down and burn it. The state had the jurisdiction and authority to do so because those properties belonged to a corporation owned by the state of Nebraska, and the corporation was breaking the laws of the state, which its charter forbade it from doing. Isn't that interesting? Everett had a wake-up call in 1983 when he found out that, if you were incorporated, the state actually owned your property.

There is a case in Florida called Matthews versus Adams. I do not have the case with me; I had it, loaned it out, and never got it back. It concerned a church with dissident members who became angry and left over how money was being spent and handled. They did not like the way the money was being handled, and so they took the church to court.

The church argued, "The court has no jurisdiction at all over how we spend our money, how we handle our money, or whatever." The court ruled that the church was wrong: "When you became incorporated, you submitted yourself in matters of jurisdiction to the state, and money is one of them. We have every right to tell you how to handle your money and what kind of business meetings you will have. Henceforth, we command that you have business meetings henceforth and forever." The church appealed, but the appellate court upheld the lower court's ruling. It changed only the requirement that meetings be held forever, ruling instead that they must be held at a certain time every year when everybody could attend. The court commanded the church to do this and said it would check to make sure, because the church was incorporated and subject to the state.

If that is not plain enough, I want to read something to you in black and white. Look it up in the Court of Appeals of Kentucky, 616 Southwestern, second edition, page 801. This was the case of State Street Baptist Church, which had been in existence for 140 years in 1973.

They decided to incorporate, and they did. Remember, they had already been in existence for 140 years without incorporation. The church continued doing things as it had always done them. Its

business meetings were very informal and infrequent, and once again, some irate members took State Street Baptist Church to court. This is what the appeals court ruled:

"The business of the church was conducted in a rather informal manner in accordance with its customs. Although this kind of conduct might be suited to church tradition, it does not comply with the requirements of the statutes regarding non-profit corporations."

The judge continued: "Once the church determined to enter into the realm of Caesar by forming a corporation, it was required to abide by the rules of Caesar, or in this case, the statutes of the Commonwealth of Kentucky." The judge said, "Church, you was doing all right until you incorporated. We had no jurisdiction over you. We had no authority over you. But when you incorporated, you submitted yourself to us. And since you submitted to us, then we're going to take care and make sure that you do exactly what we tell you to do."

Many of you will remember Lester Roloff. He was a dear friend of mine, and I enjoyed hearing him preach, teach, and sing. He couldn't sing, but he would bless your heart and break your heart every time. He could not really preach expository, but he could tell you things that stirred your heart.

Lester Roloff had a home for drunks, a home for wayward boys, and a home for wayward girls. The state of Texas came to him and said, "We're going to license those and certify those, and you're going to meet our minimum standards." Everything Lester Roloff did was top notch. The state said that if he would submit to them, he would pass all their inspections instantly, because everything he had was far above what they required. Lester said many times, "Why should I submit to the state's minimum standards when I meet God's maximum standards?" He had those homes under Roloff Evangelistic Enterprises Incorporated. When he was attacked and it appeared there would be problems, he transferred the homes to People's Baptist Church, which he pastored. The only problem was that it was People's Baptist Church Incorporated.

When it finally got to court, the judge said, “Although you oppose licensure, the court determines that you don’t oppose it in every

area. You're inconsistent because you were incorporated, and incorporation is a type of license. Since you've submitted to licensure in one area, you must submit to licensure in the other areas as well." In other words, the judge said that if you were incorporated, you were officially licensed as a church by the state.

I want to read a couple of things from the Florida statutes. It is the same in Georgia. In fact, I have been in most of the states in this country and looked at a number of their corporation law books; they all say basically the same thing. I am quoting from the Florida Business Corporation Act.

State Statutes and Corporate Control

According to 617.01, paragraph 2, "a corporation not-for-profit"—which is what most churches are when they incorporate, a nonprofit organization—"means a corporation, no part of the income of which is distributable to its members." So, when we take up an offering, we do not distribute it among the members. Well, yes and no. You give your pastor a love offering; I am a member.

What if some of you became sick or lost your jobs? What do we do as a church? We take up an offering and give it to you. If we are incorporated, we are violating a state law by doing that, because no money is to be distributed to the members.

Section 617.021 says that a corporation has a list of sixteen corporate powers. You remember that I told you a corporation is energized and sanctioned by the state. Who gives the church its energy? Who gives the church authority—the state, or Jesus Christ?

Section 617.023 states that every nonprofit corporation must have a registered office and a registered agent. Does a pastor really want to be the registered agent of the state? Do we want our church building to be a registered office for the state? Section 617.026 says, "All corporate power shall be exercised by or under the authority of a board of directors, managers, trustees." I thought Jesus Christ was the head of the church. I thought the pastor was the under-shepherd. Section 617.041 requires incorporated churches to keep a

membership book containing the name and address of each church member.

With all the persecution and oppression going on, how would you like to give me your name, address, and Social Security number so I can hand it over to the government when they ask for it? It's none of their business. But if you're incorporated, it is their business, for they energize you and sanctify you. 607.157 requires that a corporation keep permanent records, minutes of all meetings of its shareholders, its members, its board of directors, etc. Why is the corporation demanded to keep permanent records? Because the state can come in at any time and say, "Show me those records. We've come to inspect them."

607.1430 says that a circuit court may dissolve a corporation if the corporate assets are being misapplied or wasted. The district court determines whether or not the monies are being misapplied or wasted. So when you incorporate, in effect, you are asking the state for permission to exist.

Why is it that most churches incorporate? First, that's what they're told they ought to do. Second, they never think anything through. Third, they never check with the Bible. When you talk about incorporation, you've got three advantages of incorporation. First, no one else can use your name. Do you think there's more than one Freedom Baptist Church in this country? There are Faith Baptist churches all over this town, this country, and this state. But if you incorporate, it just means that no one else can use your name in that state.

What difference does it make? I'm not upset because there are other John Weavers in this world. Why should I be upset if there are other Freedom Baptist churches in this world? The second advantage of a corporation is what is known as limited liability. If we were sued and lost the lawsuit, the only monies anyone could collect would be the assets of the corporation. In other words, if we had a hundred bucks, that's all they could get. He said, "Brother Weaver, that's great." Is it?

Jesus Christ is our head and protector. If we are sued, He is capable of defending His church and supplying its needs.

If we are fully and totally liable, that means we are responsible people. If I go to Dr. Hall's house, step out his back door, and his rotten doorstep crashes through with me and I break my leg, who's responsible for taking care of it? He is. Why? Because the Bible teaches him to be responsible and not to have a rotten doorstep. If he knows he will have to take care of my leg, he will make sure that doorstep is right; he does not want to pay that money. You follow me?

If you're not incorporated, it teaches responsibility and discipline. Moreover, most legal dictionaries and legal encyclopedias will tell you that a suit cannot be maintained against an unincorporated entity unless it can be maintained against every member of that entity.

Every one of us would have to do something wrong for a suit to be maintained against the church. It is ridiculous. The only other advantage of incorporation is perpetuity; that is, it simply continues. We already have that. We do not need it. I am pointing out that when you begin to incorporate, you begin to lose everything.

If you do not understand, or if there is some doubt in your mind, consider a Supreme Court ruling in Hale v. Hinkle. The Court said: "The benefits of the Fifth Amendment are exclusively for a witness compelled to testify against himself in a criminal case, and he cannot set them up on behalf of a corporation."

A corporation has no constitutional protection. Whatever the government wants, it can get. You have no right to say, "I refuse to give that on the grounds that may tend to incriminate me." The Court further said: "A corporation is a creature of the state. And there is a reserved right in the legislature to investigate its contracts and to find out whether it has exceeded its power." If you are incorporated, the state has a reserved right to investigate and examine you at any time it deems fit. The Court continued: "There is a clear distinction between an individual and a corporation, and the latter being a creature of the state, has no constitutional right to refuse to submit its books and papers for an examination at the suit of the state." Every corporation must submit its papers.

The point is this: There is absolutely no way that a church can incorporate and be biblical. Bob McCurry wrote in Temple Times in 1983: "A state church is a church that is recognized by the state, serves the state, provides revenue for the state, and serves a public policy that is not contrary to the established public policy."

This is exactly what was decreed for the churches of America. Churches will be registered with the state by tax ID numbers and will be producers of revenue for the state by paying taxes to ensure the solvency of Social Security trust funds. You say, "Brother Weaver, that's not so." Hogwash, that's been so for years. If you're an incorporated church and you say with the government that you have employees, you're required to withhold taxes for the government and pay those taxes. The church becomes a tax collector for the civil government.

Churches will be agents of the state by confiscating and remitting to the state taxes that the state has ordered the churches to confiscate from the remuneration of church employees. Churches will be the service of the state by keeping records for and remitting records to the state. By the way, you say, "Brother Weaver, slavery has been abolished in this country." That's not true. The 14th Amendment did not free the blacks. It enslaved everybody.

You say, "Brother Weaver, I'm a free man." Well, let me ask you a question: How much money does the government pay you every year for keeping records for it? In other words, you're being compelled to work without pay. That's slavery. If a church is required to keep records for the government, it is working for the government without pay. If it's required, that is involuntary servitude. If I don't want to do it, you understand, folks, I'm just trying to say the full impact of what is going on has not really been seen.

Now, let me show you something. You've got to realize there are state churches, and there are state pastors. Associated with incorporation is what is known as the 501(c)(3) tax-exempt number.

The Illusion of Tax-Exempt Status

Now let me pause right here and tell you this. First of all, churches are not tax-exempt. They are tax-immune. Why? A church is a totally

separate jurisdiction from the state or from the government. The government has no authority over the church. Let me ask you, how many times has the state of Georgia taxed the state of Alabama? None. How many times has the state of Alabama taxed the state of Florida? None. Why? Because it's a separate entity, a separate jurisdiction. Each is a sovereign independent entity. The church is a sovereign independent entity, distinct and apart from the government.

God has created only three basic institutions. He created the family, which is a ministry of education; the church, which is a ministry of grace; and the state, which is a ministry of justice. When you leave your sphere of jurisdiction, you lose your authority.

The state cannot come over to this church and say, “Now, Pastor Weaver, you can’t preach these things.” The state has to keep its mouth shut; it has no authority over this church. This church cannot go to the state and say, “Now, look, you can execute that murderer over there.” God says they can. I have no authority to tell the state it cannot do what God says it can do, and the state has no authority to come over here and tell the church it cannot do what God says it can do. When you leave your sphere of authority, you lose your authority.

I want to use the term “tax exempt” only because that is what we are familiar with. Many people say, “Brother Weaver, if you are not a tax-exempt church, if you do not have a tax-exempt number, then the monies that I give to the church cannot be deducted from my taxes.” If the only reason you are giving money to the church is to deduct it from your taxes, you are giving for the wrong reason anyhow. But I understand wanting to deduct it, because I do not want anybody to steal from me either.

You say, “Well, you don’t have a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt number. We can’t deduct our money.” I want to show you this. I am not making it up. At the top is IRS Publication Number 557, Tax-Exempt Status for Your Organization. I did not write this; the federal government, the IRS, whoever you want to call them, did. They have a little snippet of the Declaration of Independence at the bottom. It is interesting that they include it, yet it is very difficult to read: “the

laws of nature and of," and then it stops. What comes next? "Nature's God." Isn't that interesting? They leave "Nature's God" off.

Here is what the official IRS publication, number 557, says under "Churches." I am quoting exactly verbatim: "Although a church, its integrated auxiliaries, or a convention or association of churches, is not required to file Form 1023 to be exempt from federal income tax or to receive tax-deductible contributions, such an organization may find it advantageous to obtain recognition of exemption."

Churches do not have to file any forms to be tax-exempt. They do not have to have a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt number to be taxed. They already are. But the Tax Guide went on to say, "Churches may find it advantageous to receive recognition."

I was pastoring in Jessup, and a gentleman gave a very large donation, in the thousands, to a missionary. Our church sent every cent of that money to the missionary, just as he requested. Later, he was audited, so he called me and wanted a letter stating that he had given this amount of money. On church stationery, signed by the church treasurer, we said that such-and-such had given such-and-such for such-and-such years. He called me back all excited and bent out of shape.

"The IRS won't accept that," he said. "They've got to have your 501(c)(3) tax-exempt number. They're not going to allow it."

I said, "We don't have a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt number, and they will allow it."

He told them what I had said and called back again, very upset. "They said they will not take it or allow it unless you have a number."

I said, "Sir, you tell that IRS agent to look in his Publication 557, page 17, chapter 3, read the heading under 'Churches,' and tell him that if he doesn't allow it, our church will personally enter a suit against him."

He called me back the next day and said, "It's all taken care of." I said, "I thought it would be." They say it themselves.

Here is the Tax Guide for Churches and Other Religious Organizations. Did you get that title? "For Churches and…" What? A church is not a religious organization. The church is a church. This is

put out by the Department of the Treasury, Internal Revenue Service, Publication 1828, in September of '94. Listen to this: "Does the church have to contact the IRS in order to be exempt from income taxation? No."

"Churches, their integrated auxiliaries, and conventions or associations of churches are not required to apply for and obtain recognition of tax-exempt status from the IRS in order to be treated as tax-exempt, provided they meet the requirements of Section 501(c)(3)." If your church is already exempt, you do not need their number.

That is two publications in which they said the same thing. It is interesting that the IRS then turns around and tries to give fourteen characteristics of a church. There is no definition of a church in the Internal Revenue Code, nor is there a definition of a church in any congressional law book. Listen to this. You are talking about a setup: "These attributes have been developed by the IRS and by court decision. Here are general characteristics generally attributed to churches."

Number one: "A distinct legal existence." What did they just say? We want you to be incorporated. "A recognized creed and form of worship." Recognized by whom? "A definite and distinct ecclesiastical government. A formal code of doctrine and discipline." Listen: "A distinct religious history."

A number of years ago, Pastor McCurry in Atlanta had his church attacked by the IRS. They wrote him a letter asking where he had a distinct legal existence and a right to be a church. Guess what he did? He sent them a Bible and said, "Read it for yourself." Then they wrote back asking about his distinct religious history. He sent them another Bible: "Read it for yourself." They wanted a copy of his constitution and bylaws. He sent them another Bible: "Read it for yourself." He probably sent them ten or twelve Bibles before it was over. Finally, they dropped it and left him alone.

The point is that the IRS is saying there are fourteen distinctions it applies to the church. Listen to some of them: "A literature of its own." How many little churches do you know that have their own literature? "Sunday schools for the religious instruction of the young.

Schools for the preparation of its ministry." Churches are expected to have schools for preparing their ministry. What are they trying to say? They are trying to say that if you are not a tax-exempt, incorporated denomination, normally they will not recognize you. Very obviously, I do not want to be recognized by them or sanctified by them. It is just that simple.

Now let me show you something else. Churches that have incorporated and have 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status are very limited in what they can do. We are talking about incorporated, 501(c)(3) tax-exempt churches. This is their own document, not mine: "What are the restrictions on legislative activity that may be engaged in by churches? In general, no organization, including a church, may qualify for tax-exempt status as a charitable organization if a substantial part of its activities is attempting to influence legislation."

So if you and I are trying to get our legislature or legislators to abolish abortion, fight sodomy, or hang the murderers, guess what? We're violating our 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status, and it can be taken away from us. Isn't that interesting? That is, if we are that. What constitutes attempting to influence legislation? What constitutes legislation? In other words, you can't lobby. You can't do anything.

What are the consequences that result from excessive legislative activity? What is excessive legislative activity? Who defines it? What are the restrictions on political activity that may be engaged in by churches? All Section 501(c)(3) organizations, including churches, their integrated auxiliaries, conventions, or associations, are prohibited from participating in, or intervening in—including the publication or distribution of statements—any political campaign on behalf of or in opposition to any candidate for public office.

In other words, the church cannot say, "Bless God, I stand behind Charles Collins," or, "I stand behind someone." If we do so, we have violated. If you don't believe that, contact a pastor by the name of Daniel Little. His church was just named the Church at Pierce Creek. When Bill Clinton was running for president the first time, he put out a little flyer that Bill Clinton favored sodomy, that he favored abortion, and all this kind of stuff. Guess what?

They came up and closed him down, costing him millions of dollars. Why? Because all he did was say, "Christians can't support Bill Clinton because he's a sodomite lover and abortionist and immoral and wicked and ungodly." You say, "Brother Weaver, I thought we had free speech." Well, if you're a 501(c)(3) incorporated church, you don't have free speech. It's just that simple.

Listen to this warning from their own literature: "Where a Section 501(c)(3) organization has flagrantly participated in a political campaign, the IRS may go to court for an injunction to prevent further abuse and to ensure that the organization's funds are preserved for charitable purposes." What they say is, "We can take you to court and stop you."

Why can they do that? Because you're a creature of the government. They made you, they sanctioned you, and they can stop you.

This would be downright hilarious if it were not so sad. I've had preachers tell me, "Well, Brother Weaver, I'll fight. I'll stand up. I'll take a stand when they start telling me what I can and cannot preach." If you are a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt incorporated pastor and church, they already tell you what to preach. In fact, you signed a contract for that.

Here it is, black and white, in Publication 557 of the IRS: "In order to determine whether recognition of exemption should be appropriately extended to an organization seeking to meet the religious purposes test of Section 501(c)(3), the Internal Revenue maintains two basic guidelines." Here is what the IRS uses to determine whether a church should be approved, officially sanctioned, and recognized. Number one: "That the particular religious beliefs of the organization are truly and sincerely held."

Who has problems with that? Everybody ought to believe what they believe truly and sincerely, even though they may be wrong. But who is determining whether it is truly and sincerely held? The government. That would be bad enough, except the statement continues with a comma and the conjunction "and": "The practices and rituals associated with the organization's religious belief or creed are not illegal

The contract declares that anything contrary to public policy is prohibited. Abortion in this country is public policy. Sodomy is public policy. Welfarism is public policy. A pastor who is submitted to the state, has incorporated, and has obtained a 501(c)(3) tax number violates his contract when he preaches against sodomy, which the Bible does; against abortion, which the Bible declares to be murder; or against welfarism, which is theft. He is violating the contract he signed in order to obtain his tax-exempt number. It may appropriately be rescinded. Anyone who has that number has already been told what he can and cannot preach. In other words, the government says, "If it is public policy, you stay away from it." It is just that simple.

The issue is the lordship of Jesus Christ. You have to ask yourself this question: Who is Lord? Is it Jesus Christ, or is it the state? In the first century, when the church was born through the work of Jesus Christ, the great question was, "Who is Lord?" Was it Jesus Christ, or was it Caesar?

The Lordship of Christ vs. Caesar

Many may not realize that in 14 B.C. there was a bright star that shone in the heavens. Caesar Augustus, who was then on the throne, declared it to be a divine omen. He had achieved great victories militarily, economically, and politically, and had broadcast throughout the entire Roman Empire, "There is none other name under heaven whereby you must be saved other than the name of Caesar Augustus." That may sound familiar.

Read Acts 4:12, where Peter said, "There is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved than the name of Jesus Christ." When Peter said that, he was declaring war upon the Roman Empire. He was saying, "Caesar is not Lord; Jesus Christ is Lord."

Everyone knows that in the Roman Empire Christians were thrown to the lions. They were burned at the stake, slaughtered, and mutilated. Please understand this: those Christians were not put to death merely because they were Christians. In Rome, you could believe whatever you wanted to believe. If you wanted to believe in Zeus, you could. If you wanted to worship Aphrodite or Venus, that

was permitted. If you wanted to worship Jesus Christ, that was permitted as well. They did not care. The conflict was not simply belief; it was the declaration of who is Lord.

Once a year, you swore by the genius of Caesar. You supported the emperor cult and said, "Caesar is Lord." That meant Caesar gave you the privilege of believing, living, doing, and being. But Christians would not say Caesar is Lord. They said Jesus Christ is Lord, and Caesar is to be in submission to Jesus Christ. Thus they were put to death, not merely because they were Christians, but because they were counted as traitors to the Roman Empire and as treasonous individuals.

They would not support the current governmental, politically correct philosophy, so they were executed. The question in the first century was, "Who is Lord?" A little later, in the fifteenth century, the question was, "How are we saved? Are we saved by works or by faith?" There God raised up Martin Luther and opened his eyes to justification by faith. On October 31, 1517, he nailed his ninety-five theses to the castle church door at Wittenberg, Germany.

There the great Reformation began, and from it came the principle that we are justified by faith. We did not get that principle from Martin Luther; we get it from the Bible. But God used Luther and those with him to awaken people to the truth that we are not saved by works, but by grace through faith.

Later, in the seventeenth century, the issue was the kingship of Christ. John Knox of Scotland thundered that Jesus Christ was King. He refused to submit to the Queen, who said she feared his prayers more than all the armies of Europe. Why would he not submit? Because he said it was wicked to submit to a wicked, vile, reprobate tyrant. Who is King? In John Calvin's time, the question was, "Who is God? Who is sovereign? Is God sovereign, or is man sovereign?"

Down through the centuries, and now in this century, everything has revolved back around this same initial question: Who is Lord? We have to genuinely open our eyes and ask ourselves, who is Lord? Do you know what Jesus Christ said? In Luke 6:46, Jesus Christ said, "Why call you Me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say unto you?" The word "Lord" means boss, owner, master, sovereign.

He says, “Why call you Me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say unto you?” What is He saying? He is saying, “I’m not really your Lord unless there is a practical obedience.” When “Lord” is applied to God the Father or God the Son, it denotes a practical obedience, a practical servitude. There are multitudes of churches and Christians that say Jesus Christ is Lord, and then turn around and live their lives exactly the opposite, as if they were lord, or Caesar was lord, or anyone or anything else was lord.

Conclusion: Obedience to Christ as Lord

We have to ask ourselves, who is Lord? If Jesus Christ is our Lord, we are not only going to obey Him politically; we will obey Him economically, in our families, ecclesiastically, and in every area and sphere of our lives. You say, “Prove that in the Scripture.” In the Scripture, let me show you.

The early Christians recognized this principle. Do you realize the monies that God gives me are really not my monies? They are God’s monies, and I have to use those monies in accordance with the way God declares that I should use them in the Bible. The life God has given me is not really mine. I am a steward over it, and I am going to use my life the way God directs. You say, “Brother Weaver, my politics are my own.” No, no, no. When it comes to politics, you are required to submit your mind to the Word of God, just as you are in every other sphere.

Acts chapter 17, beginning with verse 6, says: “And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, ‘These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also.’” Notice that they turned the world upside down, “whom Jason hath received.” Watch what they say about these early Christians.

"And these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another king, one Jesus." Isn't that interesting? Those early Christians said, "We're not going to obey Caesar when Caesar is contrary to the Word of God, when he's contrary to King." Why? Because Caesar is not King, Jesus Christ is King. Caesar is not Lord, Jesus Christ is Lord.

Now let me ask you, do you understand that if He is Lord, He is to be Lord over every area, every sphere of our lives? If He's my Lord, He tells me how to eat, He tells me how to dress, He tells me how to act, He tells me how to think, He tells me how to work. He's my boss, He's my owner, He's my sovereign. How many of you would keep an employee or a servant if every time you told him to do something he argued with you or did exactly the opposite?

You'd fire him in a heartbeat. Jesus Christ said, "If I'm your Lord, you're going to obey Me." Why are our churches in the mess that they're in? I think you're going to find one of the answers is because they have renounced the headship and the kingship and the lordship of Jesus Christ, and they have submitted themselves to the headship and the kingship and the lordship of civil government. And if we want to be biblical Christians, we must always submit to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Father, we ask for Your blessing, for Your help. We pray that You'd move upon us, help us to see, Lord, that Thou indeed art our Lord, and we must obey Thee financially, physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually, ecclesiastically, politically, every way that we can ever think. Lord, You are the King and the Lord of our life. I pray, Father, that since I did not really get to even finish this message, I only got halfway, Lord, that You would keep these things fresh in our hearts until I can show biblically the position of the Lordship of Christ in every area of our lives. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 2

The Church & Incorporation - 2

Introduction and Review of Incorporation

Romans 10:9 says, “If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.” Literally, the verse says that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. Romans 14:9 says, “For to this end, Christ both died and rose and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and the living.” Note that: He died and arose that He might be Lord both of the dead and the living.

When I ended my message last time, I was dealing with incorporation and 501(c)(3) status. I am not going to review all of that today, but I showed you, legally and historically, that when churches incorporate and apply for 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status, they literally submit themselves to the jurisdiction, authority, and control of the government.

I have read court cases such as State of Kentucky vs. State Street Baptist Church, Matthews vs. Adams, and People's Baptist Church in Corpus Christi, when the state attacked it. In those cases, the government stated plainly that when a church decided to incorporate, it entered into the realm of Caesar and therefore became subject to all the rules under Caesar's jurisdiction. If you do not want to be in subjection to Caesar's jurisdiction, then you need not incorporate. Once you do, you submit to state jurisdiction and state control.

The same is true of 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status. I showed that everyone who has that status has agreed not to preach against any public policy. Sodomy is plainly part of our country's public policy; abortion is part of our country's public policy; welfare is part of our country's public policy. Once you obtain 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status, you have agreed not to preach or teach against public policy.

The whole issue revolves around the Lordship of Christ: Who is head of the Church? Who is Lord?

The Centrality of Christ's Lordship

In Romans chapter 10 and Romans chapter 14, Jesus Christ was preached in the apostolic church, the early church, as the only hope for sinners. The particular title given to Jesus Christ was Lord. In the book of Acts, Jesus Christ is referred to as Savior twice, but He is referred to as Lord 92 times. Thus, the emphasis in apostolic preaching was on the Lordship of Christ. In our King James Bibles, in the New Testament, Jesus Christ is referred to as Lord 747 times. Very obviously, there is a stated emphasis upon His Lordship.

Many of you probably know what the tetragrammaton is. The tetragrammaton literally means the four written letters: tetra means four, and grammaton means that which is written. That is where we get our English word grammar. The tetragrammaton is the four written letters you see in the unmentionable name of Yahweh. When the Hebrews would write it, they would write YHWH, Yahweh, from which it is translated Jehovah. But the vowel points were not put in. This word Yahweh, which is the name of God, occurs in the Old Testament 6,832 times.

In the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Testament—which our Lord quoted from, and so did the Apostles—the word Yahweh is translated Lord 6,156 times. Very obviously, the word Lord has a great deal of significance. The Greek word is Kyrios. Kyrios is translated as boss, owner, master, or sovereign. It refers to someone ruling in sovereign power or having dominion over. When this word is applied to the Lord Jesus Christ or to God the Father, it refers to them ruling in sovereign majesty, and their sovereign rule draws forth or evokes an obedient service.

The Meaning of 'Lord' (Kyrios)

The word is used in four distinct ways in our Bibles. The first instance in which the word Lord is used refers to kings ruling with absolute authority. For instance, in Luke 22:25, Christ says, "And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and them that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors." When He says that the kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship, there is the word. It means to have dominion over or to have lordship over. A perusal of history shows that when those heathen kings ruled, they ruled with dictatorial, tyrannical authority. If they said that one lived and one died and one lived and one died, it was just that simple.

All you have to do is go back to Pharaoh and look at the butler and the baker. That is exactly what came out, just like Joseph prophesied.

These kings controlled their subjects as though the king was an absolute lord and had absolute and total dominion. The second way the word Lord is used in Scripture refers to the rule and reign of sin over the unregenerate. Romans 6:12 says, "Let not sin therefore reign or have lordship in your mortal body that you should obey it in the lust thereof." Verse 14 says, "For sin shall not have dominion or lordship over you, for you are not under the law, but under grace."

That is, we are not justified by the works of the law, but we are justified by the grace of our Lord. We are not under the law as a standard of justification. Therefore, sin shall not have dominion or lordship over us. The truth of the matter is that sin does have

lordship over the unconverted. This is the second way the word is used in Scripture.

Sin is their lord. It has a tyrannical dominion over them. When an unconverted man says, “I can't help myself,” it is true. When King Sin demands it, the unconverted jumps. It is just that simple. He is still responsible—not the sin—to obey God. But the truth is that he is under an alien Lord. When that Lord commands him, he jumps. Sin is therefore referred to as a lord, or as having dominion.

Thirdly, in Romans chapter 5, we see that sin not only has the title of Lord, but so does death. Romans 5:14 says, “Nevertheless, death reigned from Adam to Moses.” Note the phrase: death what? Reigned. Death exercised lordship and dominion from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who was the figure of him that was to come. Now watch verse 17. It says, “For if by one man's offense death reigned by one.” Very obviously, the word Lord refers not only to the unbreakable power of sin over man, but also to the unbreakable power and dominion of death over men. Death lords it over men. All of us are going to die physically unless the Lord returns. But death is still not our Lord, because Jesus Christ has defeated death.

You see what I’m saying? For the unconverted, then, they are ruled not only by sin, but also by death. Sin, death, and man have all had the title of lord ascribed to them in one way or the other.

Fourthly, the word is used in reference to Jesus Christ being Lord. In 1 Timothy chapter 6, Paul says, “That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.” This is verse 14. Verse 15 says, “Who in his times he shall show who is the blessed and only potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords,” literally, the King of the reigning kings and the Lord of the ruling lords. When the Bible says that Jesus Christ is the only potentate, potentate means the all-powerful One. Jesus Christ is the only all-powerful One. I get absolutely

I am amazed, as well as tickled, at these men running around calling some other man “the most high potentate” and all this kind of junk. I mean, that is ridiculous. I told you about Pastor Peacock and myself. We went to a gun show in the shrine temple in Albany,

Georgia. As we were walking to it, I saw a parking spot that said, "Reserved for the potentate." I looked at Brother Peacock and said, "Isn't it wonderful? They preserved a parking spot for Jesus Christ when He returned. He's the only potentate I know of." You see, He is the only potentate. He is the only all-powerful One.

Now, let me show you three things. First of all, the Lordship of Christ is the authentic confession of a Christian. If you have been saved by the grace of God, if you have been converted, you have acknowledged Jesus Christ as Lord.

Lordship as the Authentic Confession of a Christian

The Bible says in Romans chapter 10, "Thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thine heart; thou shalt be saved." Now, let us go back to this word confess. That is the word most of us take out of context. In 1 John 1:9, we read, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." But most people do not understand that word confess. They think that if they go out and steal from Ed, all they have to do is say, "Well, Lord, I have stolen. Please forgive me," and that is it. That is not it, folks.

The word confess in the Greek is homolegeo. Homo means one or the same; lego, as I say. We confess our sins only when we say the same thing that God says about our sins, when we take the attitude that God takes. If I have stolen from Ed and confess that sin, it means I agree with God that the sin is wicked, wrong, vile, and worthy of death. Since it is wrong, I have to make it right. I go back, make restitution to Ed, and ask his forgiveness as well. That is confession. You have confession only when you have repentance and restitution where it is necessary.

The same word is used: "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth, Jesus Christ is Lord." What does that mean? If you confess—if you have an exact agreement with God concerning what God says about Jesus Christ—and God says that Jesus Christ is His Lord, His boss, His owner, His master, His sovereign, His Savior, and that He is sent to rule over the world, then a true Christian has acknowledged that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Here is the difference between the regenerate and the unregenerate. The unregenerate is ruled by sin, and the regenerate are ruled by the Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, we have two totally different masters; we have bowed to two different lords. We do what Christ says, and the world does what sin says. It is just that simple.

I know some of you have read Pilgrim's Progress, written by John Bunyan. It is an allegory, but if you have never read it, you ought to read it. The first time I read it, I was in Birmingham, Alabama, preaching in a meeting many years ago. It was about midnight, and I could not put the book down. When I got to the end, I was so excited that I started shouting.

I was in someone's home in the basement, and I woke my host and hostess. They did not know what was wrong with me. I said, "Well, I just had a real blessing, is all." But let me read a section from this book that shows the difference between the unregenerate and the regenerate. Christian has left the City of Destruction and is on his way to the City of Zion, the heavenly city, but he meets Apollyon.

This is an allegory. Apollyon, or the devil, asks Christian, "Which come you and whither are you bound?" Christian answers, "I have come from the City of Destruction, which is the place of all evil, and I'm going to the city of Zion."

Apollyon says, "By this I perceive that thou art one of my subjects, for all that country is mine, and I am the prince and god of it. How is it, then, that thou hast run away from thy king? Were it not that I hoped that thou mayest do me more service, I would strike thee now at one blow to the ground."

Christian replies, "I was born indeed in your dominions, but your service was hard, and your wages were such as a man could not live on, for the wages of sin is death."

Apollyon answers, "Therefore, when I was come to years, I did as other considerate persons do, look at it. Perhaps I might mend myself upon him. There is no prince that will thus lightly lose his subjects. Neither will I get as lose thee, but since thou complainest of my service and wages, now listen, be content, go back. What our country can afford, I do hereby promise to give unto you."

Christian says, “But I have let myself to another, even to the King of Princes. And how can I, with fairness, go back with thee?”

Apollyon replies, “Thou hast done in this according to the proverb, change the bad for worse. But it is ordinary for those who have professed themselves to be his servants, after a while, to give him the slip and return again unto thee. Do thou so likewise, and all shall be well.”

Christian answers, “I have given him my faith and sworn my allegiance to him. How then can I go back from this and not be hanged as a traitor?” Apollyon says, “Thou didst the same to me, and yet I am willing to pass all by if thou wilt turn again and go back.”

Christian replies, “What I promised thee was in my non-age. And besides, I count the Prince under whose banner now I stand is able to absolve me, yea, and to pardon me also what I did in my compliance with thee. And besides this, O thou destroying Apollyon, to speak the truth, I like his service, his wages, his service, his government, his company, and his country better than mine; and therefore leave off to persuade me further. I am his servant, I will follow him, and I will not go back.”

Here is a clear delineation: the man who is trusted in Christ has bowed to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. In 1 Corinthians 12:3, the Apostle Paul says, "Wherefore, I give you to understand that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed, and that no man can say that Jesus is Lord, but by the Holy Ghost."

This verse contains, first of all, a negation, that is, a negative, and secondly, an affirmation, that is, a positive. He says, "Wherefore, I give you to understand that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed." If anyone ever curses Christ, says Christ is anathema, puts down Christ, or belittles Christ in any way, that person is not speaking by the Spirit of God, because the Spirit of God does not curse or dishonor Christ. He always honors Christ.

Then look at the affirmation. He goes on to say in verse 3, "and that no man can say that Jesus Christ is Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." Does that mean that you can walk out on the streets of this town and find people who cannot take their tongue and frame the words "Jesus Christ is Lord" with their mouth? No. Men may

imitate, but only the Holy Spirit can authenticate. Only the Holy Spirit can make it real and genuine. People can say, "Jesus is Lord" all day long, and it not be real. But when the Holy Spirit of God moves in them, then it is real and genuine. In other words, it is a spiritual work.

Genesis 37 gives an excellent illustration. When he says that no man can say that Jesus Christ is Lord but by the Holy Ghost, he is not talking about a physical inability, but a moral and spiritual inability. The passage begins, "And Jacob dwelt in the land where his father was a stranger in the land of Canaan. And these are the generations of Jacob."

"Joseph, being 17 years old, was feeding the flock with his brethren. And the lad was with the sons of Bilhah, with the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives. And Joseph brought unto his father their evil report." I do not know what those boys were going to do. Maybe they were going to steal some of his cattle or some of his sheep. I don't know. But anyhow, Joseph says what they are doing is not right, and he went home and told his father.

Young people, listen to me. This is not being a tattletale. Being a tattletale is when you try to get people in trouble by not telling the truth and by whining about every little thing. These boys were about to do something positively wicked and wrong, and Joseph came home and told his father.

Now watch verse 3: "Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children because, or and, he was a son of his old age." And he made him "a coat of many colors." When his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, "they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him."

This coat was not merely a pretty coat. Joseph was now the executor of the estate. In other words, he was going to be the head over all his brethren. He received the double portion. Why? Reuben was supposed to be the eldest, but he defiled his father's couch by going into his father's concubine. Jacob said, "I can't have him." Simeon and Levi took their swords and slew a whole city full of people. They were next. Joseph, although he was the youngest at this time, came back around; Benjamin, of course, was after Joseph.

Joseph was the one with character, integrity, and honesty. Jacob said, "At last I found a son that I can trust. I want to make him the executor of my estate." When his brethren saw that their father loved him more, they understood the significance of the coat. "Then all of his brethren" hated him.

"And could not speak peaceably to him." Does that mean they could not and did not have the physical ability to say, "Good morning, Joseph, how are you today?" They had the physical ability, but they could not speak peacefully to him because they hated him. It was a moral and spiritual inability. So when he says that no man can say that Jesus Christ is Lord, but by the Holy Ghost, it is not that they do not have the power in their tongue to say it. They do not have the moral and spiritual ability to effectuate it. Only the Holy Spirit of God can do that.

The Necessity of Obedience to Christ's Lordship

First Corinthians chapter 12, verse 3, presents two different people: the regenerate and the unregenerate. The unregenerate curse Jesus Christ, but the regenerate have bowed to Him as Lord. Jesus Christ asks in Luke 6:46, "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" When the word Lord was applied to Jesus Christ or to God the Father, it meant sovereign rulership, sovereign authority that drew forth an obedient service. Christ continues, "Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will show you to whom he is like."

"He is likened to a man which built a house and dug deep and laid the foundation on a rock. And when the flood arose and the stream beat vehemently upon that house and could not shake it, for it was founded upon a rock, but he that heareth and doeth not is like a man that without a foundation built a house upon the earth, against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great."

What did our Lord say? "Why in the world do you call me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I send you?" Those people profess to be converted and profess that He is their Lord, yet they do not obey Him. They do not make a practical application of His law to their lives; they do not do what He says. They have no basis or

ground to call Him their Lord, for He is not. Those who acknowledge Him as Lord do what He says. If He is genuinely our Lord, then there is drawing forth from us an obedient, practical service.

Romans chapter 10 and verse 9, 1 Corinthians chapter 12 and verse 3, and Luke 6 and verse 46 definitely teach that if one has a genuine saving experience with Jesus Christ, he has bowed to the Lordship of Christ. When we are converted by the grace of God, we are not our own. We have been bought with a price. Christ has absolute and total authority over us.

Remember Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus. A great light shone from heaven, and God knocked Saul down to the ground. The first words that escaped from Saul's mouth were, "Lord, who are thou?" I do not know who You are, but whoever You are, You are bound to be Lord. You just show me who You are and I will serve You. The answer came back, "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest. It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks."

After Saul understood who was Lord, Jesus was Lord, his second question was, "Lord, what will thou have me to do?" There is going to be a practical, obedient service. If Jesus Christ is Lord, then we are bound to obey Him. It is just that simple.

Remember John chapter eight, the woman taken in the very act of adultery. These men had brought this woman, and there is a reason why our Lord did what He did. He knelt down and wrote on the ground, and He said, "He that is without these things," that is, he that is not guilty of the same thing she is guilty of, "let him cast the first stone."

The Bible says that, being convicted by their own conscience, they went out from the eldest to the youngest. In other words, they were equally as guilty as she was; and had they condemned her, they would have condemned themselves. When they had gone, our Lord looked up at the woman and said, “Woman, where are those thine accusers? Doth no man condemn thee?” She said, “No man, Lord.” And when she said that, He said, “Neither do I condemn thee. Go and sin no more.”

What was she doing? She was recognizing that He was the Lord and bowing to His sovereign authority and power.

Let me give you one other example. In Luke chapter 23, the two thieves were on the cross. One of them railed against Christ, saying, “If you're the son of God, get us off this cross.” His attitude was, “I'd like to steal some more, I'd like to kill some more.” But the other thief said, “Man, don't you fear God, seeing that we're hanging here indeed justly, seeing this man hath done nothing amiss.” He was confessing the absolute innocence and perfection of Jesus Christ. Then he looked at Christ and said, “Lord, remember me when I've come as in my kingdom.” He was submitting to Jesus Christ as Lord.

The man who has bowed savingly to Jesus Christ has submitted to His lordship. Do you remember what Jesus Christ told His disciples in Matthew 28:18? He said, “All authority in heaven and earth is given unto me.”

Now let me show you the blasphemy involved in the lives of most Christians and most churches. When people profess that Jesus Christ is Lord, but do not actually give Him practical, obedient service, they are saying that sin and death have more authority, power, and dominion than Jesus Christ, because they will obey sin and death but will not obey Christ. That is blasphemy. Jesus Christ is Lord.

If you understand this first point, you understand that no man can knowingly, deliberately, and willingly receive Christ as Savior, deny Him as Lord, and be saved. You cannot separate the person and work of Jesus Christ. Do you remember what the Bible says in Matthew 1:21? Gabriel told Joseph and Mary, “Thou shalt call his name Jesus.” Why? “For he shall what? Save his people from their sin.”

Salvation is not from hell. Salvation is from sin. When somebody says, “I want to be saved from hell so I can live in my sins,” that is not salvation. God does not save you from judgment so you can live any way you want. He saves you from sin, which causes you to come to judgment. Being saved from judgment is a byproduct of being saved from your sins. Those whom Christ saves, He rules over. With His salvation comes His service; with His deliverance comes His dominion; with His kingdom comes His kingship.

You cannot have one without the other. Those who say, “Christ will save you; you just do not have to bow to Him,” are not speaking truly. He said, “If thou shalt confess, if you will agree exactly with God that Jesus Christ is Lord, and believe in your heart, thou mayest be saved.” You must have an exact agreement with God. God has already said that everything is to be brought under the authority and sovereignty of Jesus Christ.

Secondly, the lordship of Christ is the original confession of the church. It is not only the authentic confession of the Christian; it is the original confession of the church. Look back in your Bibles to Acts chapter 2. Peter is preaching a sermon on the lordship of Christ. Look what he says.

Lordship as the Original Confession of the Church

Acts chapter 2, verse 30: “Therefore, being a prophet,” talking about David, “and knowing that God has sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne. He seeing this before, spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up whereof we are all witnesses, therefore being by the right hand of God exalted. And having received of the father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which you now see here. For David is not ascended in the heavens. But he said to himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou on my right hand until I make thy foes thy footstool. Therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made that same Jesus whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.” Note that God hath made that same Jesus whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.

God made, God declared Jesus Christ to be Lord. Now, so many people try to come along and say, “Well, the word Lord just means God.” If you say that, folks, you’ve got real serious theological problems. For the Bible says that God made Jesus Christ God. And that’s blasphemy. Jesus Christ is the uncreated God. He is the eternal God. He is God incarnate.

Now, let me show you something else. In John chapter 20, Jesus appeared to the disciples, but Thomas was not there. When the

disciples told Thomas, “Jesus has appeared to us,” he said, “No, no, except I see the holes. And unless I take my hand and run it through the hole in his side, I won’t believe.” At the next meeting Thomas was there, and Christ appeared. Christ looked at Thomas and said, “Be not doubting, but believe. Take your fingers, put it in my hands, take your hand, thrust it into my side, and see that it is I, myself, and not a spirit.” Now, did Thomas actually do that?

He fell on his face and said, “My Lord and my God.” If the word Lord simply means God, all Thomas said was, “My God and my God.” That’s kind of redundant, isn’t it? No, he said, “My Lord, my boss, my owner, my sovereign. And my God.” That’s exactly what he was saying. He was confessing that Jesus Christ was absolutely Lord. Now the Bible says that God hath made that same Jesus whom you crucified, Lord.

I get so amazed at people. I hear preachers say it, and I hear Christians say it. They look at other people and say, “Won’t you make Jesus Christ your Lord?” I get so aggravated, and I want to scream, You can’t do that. God has already beat you to that. God made Him Lord. You may recognize Him, and you may bow to Him, but you can’t make Him Lord. He already is Lord.

All power in heaven and earth is given unto Him. Look in your Bibles to the book of Acts, chapter 5, verses 30 and 31. Peter says, “The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you slew and hanged on a tree.” Now watch why God raised Him up: “Him hath God exalted with his right hand, to be a prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.”

The word prince is the word archegon, literally ruler. God raised Him up at His own right hand. Why? To be a ruler and a Savior. You can’t have Him as Savior unless you have Him as ruler. He’s both. With His salvation comes His rulership. With His kingdom comes His kingship. So very obviously, God has raised Him up that He might be a prince, a ruler and a Savior, that He might give forgiveness of sins.

He has the authority to give forgiveness because He is the ruler. He is the prince. Look in your Bible to the book of Luke, chapter 1. This is known as the Magnificat, the song of Mary. She is going to

Elizabeth's house, and when she gets there, Elizabeth, who was pregnant with John the Baptist, has John leap in her womb for joy. Mary then begins to sing this song, in verse 46: "And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior."

This is known as poetic parallelism. When she says, "My soul doth magnify the Lord," and then, "my spirit hath rejoiced in God, my Savior," God, my Savior, and Lord are parallel. That means they are synonymous; they are one and the same. Now turn to Titus 2. I want to give you a brief Greek lesson, a principle known as the Granville Sharp Rule. This rule holds true throughout the entire Greek New Testament. Here is the rule: whenever you have a proper noun, a conjunction, and another noun,

Preceded by the definite article, "the," the two nouns are always synonymous. If I took the time to take you through the Bible, I could show you this in every case, but let me show you one. In Titus 2:13, Paul says, "Looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior, Jesus Christ." Did you see that? Great God and our Savior Jesus Christ. Here is a noun, "the great God," a title and a name. Here is another one, "the Savior Jesus Christ." They are connected by a conjunction and preceded by the definite article, "the." That means the great God and Jesus Christ are synonymous. They are one and the same. Jesus Christ is Lord. He is the great God.

That is why, in Acts 10, verse 36, it says, "The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ," and then, "He is Lord of all."

Now let me give you specific illustrations of how the early church confessed that Jesus Christ is Lord. In Acts 11, Peter had gone into the household of Cornelius in Acts 10, and his household was converted. In Acts 11, Peter was giving a report to the men of Jerusalem. They were upset with Peter because he had gone into Cornelius's house. But Peter said, "For as much as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?"

When they heard these things, they held their peace and glorified God, saying, “Then if God also to the Gentiles granted repentance and life.” Go back to verse 17: “For as much as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ.” The early church confessed that Jesus Christ was Lord.

Let me tell you the earliest baptismal formula. The early church had this confession in its baptismal formula. If you had been alive in the first century, had been converted, and were to be baptized, you would have had to say this as you entered into the water: “Jesus is Lord.”

Baptism today does not mean much because we have robbed it of its significance. If you go to the average Baptist church and they have a baptism after the service, most people get up and walk out. It does not mean anything to them. But in the New Testament, when you were baptized and said, “Jesus is Lord,” do you know what you just did? You either signed your death warrant or had your goods confiscated.

It meant something in New Testament times to say that Jesus Christ is Lord, because you were in opposition to the Roman Empire. Christians were not put to death in the Roman Empire simply because they were Christians. They were put to death because they refused to say that Caesar was Lord. They refused to support the emperor and to swear by the genius of Caesar. In Rome, you could believe whatever you wanted to believe. They were put to death because they were considered traitors and treasonous to the Roman Empire, because they confessed that Jesus Christ is Lord.

The world does not care what you believe, so long as you do not practice or apply it, and so long as you do not demand that they practice and apply it. You can believe all you want to believe, as long as you keep it between your two ears. But when you start making a practical application of the Lordship of Christ, people get upset. The church, however, confessed that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Remember the Philippian jailer? He came trembling in Acts 16, fell on his knees before Paul and Silas, and said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” Paul said, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” In 2 Corinthians 4:5, he said, “We preach Jesus

Christ as Lord." The early church confessed that Jesus Christ was Lord. Because Jesus Christ is Lord, the Lordship of Christ is not only the authentic confession of the Christian; it is the original confession of the church. And thirdly, the Lordship of Christ is the ultimate confession of all creation.

SCRIPTURE READING - Philippians 2:5-11 (KJV)

Lordship as the Ultimate Confession of All Creation

> This is a tremendous passage. Some of you will remember that a number of years ago I preached 10 or 12 sermons from this passage.
>
> "Let this mind be in you, which also was in Christ Jesus. Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon himself the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death on the cross. Wherefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, of things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

First of all is the adoration of His name. He has been given a name which is above every name. He is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Secondly, the Apostle Paul tells us there is going to be an ultimate confession and acknowledgment of His Lordship. These two things, says the Apostle Paul, are going to be done unto the glory of God the Father. Hold Philippians chapter 2, and turn back in your Bibles to John chapter 5. Here is the healing of the man at the pool of Bethesda.

Let us begin with verse 1: "After this there was a feast of the Jews; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the

water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had. And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years. When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he saith unto him, 'Wilt thou be made whole?' The impotent man answered him, 'Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool.'"

"But while I am coming, another steppeth down before me." Jesus said unto him, "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk." Immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked.

Now let me stop there. Here is my question. Jesus Christ walked into these five porches, wherein lay a great multitude of impotent, blind, halt, and maimed people, waiting for the moving of the water. Jesus Christ singled out one man and healed him. Why did He heal that one man? Did not all those people need healing? Yes. Did not Jesus Christ have power to heal all of them? Yes. Why, then, did Christ heal this one man?

You say, "Brother Weaver, he wanted it." This man who was healed did not even know who Christ was. He never asked to be healed. Christ said, "Wilt thou be made whole?" He replied, "Sir, I have nobody to help me get down to the pool. I am trying to get there, but somebody else jumps in before me." Jesus simply said, "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk." Why did Christ single out this one man?

Let me show you why. Look in John chapter 5, beginning with verse 20: "For the Father loveth the Son, and showeth him all things that himself doeth, and he will show him greater works than these that ye may marvel." Watch verse 21: "For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom he will." Now, wait a minute.

What is the one attribute that demonstrates that God is God? It is His absolute sovereignty. God does not owe anybody anything, folks, but justice. Anything we get outside of justice is God's mercy. Jesus Christ did not owe healing to any of those people. He walked in and healed that one man. Why? To demonstrate His absolute

sovereignty. As the Father quickened whom He will, so even so the Son quickened whom He will.

Watch verse 22: “For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son. Why? That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him.” You see, folks, Jesus Christ is God.

Scripture said that every knee is going to bow, of things in heaven, of things in earth, and things under earth; and every tongue is going to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. That only means the Christian’s tongue, but the heathen tongue, the atheist tongue, the infidel tongue. Every tongue is ultimately going to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. We are in theological error when we look at people and witness to them and say, “Will you confess Jesus Christ as Lord?” That is not a legitimate question. The right question is, “When will you confess him as Lord?” You will confess him either in salvation or damnation, but you will confess him.

When David and Solomon came along, the people would exclaim, “God save the king.” But a greater than David is here, a greater than Solomon is here, and that is Jesus Christ, who has all authority in heaven and earth!

Application: Christ vs. Caesar as Head of the Church

Here is the point: tie together what I preached this week with what I preached last on incorporation and 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status. If Jesus Christ is Lord, if He is the head of the church, there is no way that the state can be the head. If the state is the head, there is no way that Christ can be the head.

You do not have a two-headed creature. That is an anomaly, a monstrosity. Either Christ is our head, or the government is our head. It is that simple. I began the message two weeks ago by asking, Who is the head of your church? Who has ultimate jurisdiction? Who has ultimate authority? Who has the final say? My question is answered by this statement: that depends on who is the head of your church. If Jesus Christ is the head, then He has the ultimate say.

If Christ is Lord—and He is—we have no choice. We must obey Him. Consider the mentality of the early Christians in Acts 17. You may say, “Brother Weaver, you do not understand.” But today our government is so corrupt and so perverted. If you do not do what they tell you, they will put you in jail. They will confiscate your property. They will even shoot you down, the way they have done some people in this country. Who is your head? Is it the government, or is it Christ?

Acts 17, verse 6, says, “And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These, that is, these Christians that have turned the world upside down, are come hither also.” Then they said, “Whom Jason hath received, and these, that is, these Christians, all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying there's another king, one Jesus.” Is that not interesting? Who is your king? Is it Christ, or is it Caesar? Is it Christ, or is it the IRS? Is it Christ, or is it the ATF? If Christ is our Lord, we must obey Him. When we do not obey Him in practice, we deny Him.

We may say that He is our Lord with our mouths, but with our bodies do not confess Him as Lord, and our Lord asks, “Why do you call me Lord, Lord? And do not the things which I say unto you?” If Christ is our Lord, we must obey Him.

The matter is clear. It is a matter of lordship. It is a matter of kingship. It is a matter of jurisdiction, and God has never, ever given the civil government jurisdiction over the church in any shape, form, or fashion. Jesus Christ is Lord.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee this day. We thank Thee for who Thou art and what Thou art, and Father, we confess, we acknowledge that Jesus Christ is King of the reigning kings and Lord of the reigning lords. He has ultimate authority, ultimate jurisdiction. And we ask, Father, that Thou enable us to obey Him and worship Him. In the name of Christ we pray, Amen.

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