WEAVER STUDY GUIDES

The Church & Incorporation

Study Guide

Old Testament Studies

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A lesson-by-lesson companion for reading, discussion, and written responses.

Downloadable classroom edition | 8.5 x 11 inches

Name / group

Date

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Using this guide

Read the corresponding chapter, then work through the themes, arguments, and Scripture references.

Write your responses before discussing the questions with others. Use the application pages to identify a practical next step.

The study material is retained from the existing lecture study guides. Added writing prompts provide space for your own response.

Print at Actual Size / 100% on US Letter paper. Single-sided and double-sided printing are both suitable. Lessons begin on the next available page; no blank pages are inserted.

Reading assignments refer to the October 9, 2026 opening-heading corrected edition of the companion book. Online lecture links and QR codes are collected at the end.

LESSON 1

The Church & Incorporation - 1

September 28, 1997

Read Chapter 1 in the companion book, pages 5-26 (October 9, 2026 opening-heading corrected edition).

Major Themes

Headship of Christ vs. State Control

The central theme is whether Jesus Christ or the civil government is the true head of the church, with incorporation seen as a surrender to state authority.

Lecture support: Weaver repeatedly asks, 'Is Jesus Christ the head of your church, or is the civil government the head of your church?' and cites Scripture to affirm Christ's headship.

Historical Baptist Resistance to Incorporation

Weaver emphasizes that opposition to church incorporation is not new but was a major concern for Baptists in the 18th century, who saw it as blending the kingdom of Christ with the world.

Lecture support: He quotes Isaac Backus and the Warren Association's 1791 decision: 'by no means they are to apply to civil government for incorporation.'

Legal Implications of Incorporation

Incorporation makes the church a creature of the state, subject to its laws, with no constitutional protections, and governed by a board rather than biblical leadership.

Lecture support: Weaver explains that a corporation is 'an artificial person created by the state' and 'subject to the state in all things.'

Tax-Exempt Status as State Control

501(c)(3) status is portrayed as a contract with the state that restricts the church's speech and activities, making it a 'state church.'

Lecture support: Weaver reads IRS guidelines that prohibit 'attempting to influence legislation' and 'participating in...any political campaign.'

The Lordship of Christ in All Spheres

Weaver argues that if Christ is Lord, He must be obeyed in every area of life, including church governance, politics, and finances.

Lecture support: He cites Luke 6:46: 'Why call you Me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say unto you?'

Key Arguments

Incorporation denies Christ's headship

Incorporation replaces Christ as head with a board of directors subject to state law, making the state the ultimate authority over the church.

Lecture support: Weaver states, 'if we are incorporated, not only is Jesus Christ not the head of the church, the state is.'

Incorporation makes the church a creature of the state

A corporation is created, sanctified, and empowered by the state, and thus has no constitutional rights against state intrusion.

Lecture support: Weaver quotes the Supreme Court: 'A corporation is a creature of the state...has no constitutional right to refuse to submit its books and papers.'

Historical Baptists rejected incorporation

Baptists in the 1700s understood that incorporation gave the state authority over the church and allowed unconverted members to control it.

Lecture support: Weaver reads from Isaac Backus: 'incorporation acknowledged the right of the state to decide which churches could and which churches could not be chartered.'

501(c)(3) status restricts biblical preaching

Tax-exempt status prohibits churches from opposing public policy, effectively silencing biblical teaching on issues like abortion and sodomy.

Lecture support: Weaver reads IRS guidelines: 'practices and rituals...are not illegal or contrary to public policy.'

Churches are tax-immune, not tax-exempt

Churches are sovereign entities separate from the state and do not need state permission to be free from taxation.

Lecture support: Weaver argues, 'churches are not tax-exempt. They are tax-immune...The government has no authority over the church.'

Incorporation leads to state takeover of church property

Case studies show that incorporated churches can have their property seized because the corporation is owned by the state.

Lecture support: Weaver recounts the Everett Sullivan case: 'the state had the jurisdiction and authority to do so because those properties belong to a corporation owned by the state.'

The early church confessed Christ as King, not Caesar

Christians in Acts were accused of acting contrary to Caesar's decrees, saying Jesus is King, which should be the model for today.

Lecture support: Weaver cites Acts 17:7: 'these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another king, one Jesus.'

Scripture References

Ephesians 1:20-23

Weaver reads this passage to establish that Christ is the head over all things to the church.

Ephesians 4:15

Weaver cites this verse to reinforce that Christ is the head of the church.

Ephesians 5:23

Weaver uses this verse to show Christ as head of the church, analogous to the husband as head of the wife.

Colossians 1:18

Weaver quotes this to affirm Christ's preeminence as head of the body, the church.

Colossians 2:9-10

Weaver reads this to show Christ is head of all principality and power.

Acts 4:12

Weaver references Peter's declaration that salvation is in no other name than Jesus Christ, contrasting it with Caesar's claim.

Luke 6:46

Weaver quotes Jesus' question to emphasize that calling Him Lord requires obedience.

Acts 17:6-7

Weaver reads this passage to show early Christians were accused of defying Caesar's decrees by proclaiming Jesus as King.

Discussion Questions

1. What does it mean for Christ to be the head of the church, and how does incorporation challenge that?

Consider: Weaver opens by asking who is the head of the church and contrasts Christ's headship with state control.

2. Why did early American Baptists oppose church incorporation, and are their concerns still valid today?

Consider: Weaver reads from Isaac Backus and the Warren Association to show historical opposition.

3. In what ways does incorporation make the church a 'creature of the state'?

Consider: Weaver explains the legal attributes of a corporation and its relationship to the state.

4. How do the case studies (Everett Sullivan, State Street Baptist, etc.) illustrate the dangers of incorporation?

Consider: Weaver recounts several legal cases where incorporated churches lost property or autonomy.

5. What is the difference between being tax-exempt and tax-immune, and why does it matter?

Consider: Weaver argues that churches are inherently tax-immune and do not need state recognition.

6. How does 501(c)(3) status limit a church's ability to speak on moral and political issues?

Consider: Weaver reads IRS restrictions on legislative and political activity.

7. What does it mean to confess 'Jesus is Lord' in the context of church-state relations?

Consider: Weaver connects the early church's confession to modern submission to civil government.

8. How should the lordship of Christ affect our decisions about church governance and finances?

Consider: Weaver concludes by calling for obedience to Christ in every sphere, including ecclesiastical matters.

Applications

Evaluate your church's incorporation status

Weaver urges believers to examine whether their church is incorporated and to consider the implications of state control over Christ's headship.

Lecture support: Weaver asks, 'Is Jesus Christ the head of your church, or is the civil government the head of your church?'

Reject state licensure of the church

Weaver implies that churches should not seek state recognition or incorporation, as it compromises their independence and biblical authority.

Lecture support: He cites the Warren Association: 'by no means they are to apply to civil government for incorporation.'

Understand the legal risks of incorporation

Weaver warns that incorporated churches can lose property and be forced to comply with state mandates, as seen in the case studies.

Lecture support: He recounts the Everett Sullivan case where the state claimed ownership of church property.

Recognize the church as tax-immune, not tax-exempt

Weaver teaches that churches do not need 501(c)(3) status to be free from taxation and should not seek state permission.

Lecture support: He states, 'churches are not tax-exempt. They are tax-immune.'

Submit all areas of life to Christ's lordship

Weaver calls believers to obey Christ in finances, politics, and church governance, not just personal piety.

Lecture support: He quotes Luke 6:46 and emphasizes practical obedience.

Be willing to defy state mandates that contradict Scripture

Weaver points to the early church's example of obeying God rather than Caesar when the two conflict.

Lecture support: He cites Acts 17:7: 'these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another king, one Jesus.'

Personal Application and Notes

Which application will you work on, and what specific step will you take?

What Scripture or teaching will you return to as you put this into practice?

Additional notes or questions to discuss

LESSON 2

The Church & Incorporation - 2

October 05, 1997

Read Chapter 2 in the companion book, pages 27-45 (October 9, 2026 opening-heading corrected edition).

Major Themes

The Lordship of Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ is the sovereign Lord, boss, owner, and master over all creation, and this Lordship is central to the gospel and the church's identity.

Lecture support: Weaver emphasizes that Jesus is called Lord 747 times in the New Testament and that Kyrios means sovereign ruler. He cites Romans 14:9, Acts 2:36, and Philippians 2:9-11.

Confession of Christ's Lordship as Essential to Salvation

Saving faith involves confessing Jesus as Lord, which means agreeing with God about His authority and submitting to His rule.

Lecture support: Romans 10:9 is expounded to show that confession (homolegeo) means agreeing with God that Jesus is Lord. Weaver uses the examples of Saul (Acts 9) and the thief on the cross (Luke 23).

Obedience as the Evidence of Christ's Lordship

Those who truly acknowledge Christ as Lord will obey Him; calling Him Lord without obedience is blasphemy.

Lecture support: Luke 6:46 is cited: 'Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?' Weaver argues that disobedience implies sin and death have more authority than Christ.

The Church's Original Confession of Christ's Lordship

The early church consistently confessed Jesus as Lord, even at the cost of persecution, because they recognized His ultimate authority over all earthly powers.

Lecture support: Acts 2:36, Acts 5:30-31, and the baptismal formula 'Jesus is Lord' are referenced. Weaver notes Christians were executed for refusing to say 'Caesar is Lord.'

The Ultimate Universal Confession of Christ's Lordship

Every person will ultimately confess Jesus Christ is Lord, either willingly in salvation or unwillingly in judgment.

Lecture support: Philippians 2:9-11 is quoted: 'every knee should bow... and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.'

Conflict Between Christ's Lordship and State Authority

Incorporation and 501(c)(3) status place the church under government jurisdiction, creating a conflict with Christ's sole headship over the church.

Lecture support: Weaver reviews court cases (State of Kentucky vs. State Street Baptist Church) and argues that the church cannot have two heads. Acts 17:6-7 shows early Christians defied Caesar's decrees.

Key Arguments

Incorporation Submits the Church to State Jurisdiction

When a church incorporates or obtains 501(c)(3) status, it legally submits to government authority and control, compromising Christ's headship.

Lecture support: Weaver cites court cases like State of Kentucky vs. State Street Baptist Church and explains that 501(c)(3) status prohibits preaching against public policy.

The New Testament Emphasizes Christ's Lordship

The apostolic preaching focused on Jesus as Lord, not just Savior, indicating that His sovereign rule is integral to the gospel.

Lecture support: In Acts, Jesus is called Lord 92 times but Savior only twice. In the NT, Lord appears 747 times. The Septuagint translates Yahweh as Lord 6,156 times.

Confession of Christ's Lordship Requires Agreement with God

The Greek word for confess (homolegeo) means to say the same thing as God; thus, confessing Jesus as Lord means fully agreeing with God's assessment of His authority.

Lecture support: Weaver explains homolegeo from Romans 10:9 and 1 John 1:9, emphasizing that true confession involves repentance and restitution.

No One Can Genuinely Confess Christ's Lordship Without the Holy Spirit

1 Corinthians 12:3 teaches that only the Holy Spirit enables a person to authentically confess Jesus as Lord; it is a moral and spiritual ability, not merely verbal.

Lecture support: Weaver uses the illustration of Joseph's brothers in Genesis 37, who 'could not speak peaceably' due to hatred, to explain moral inability.

Salvation Includes Deliverance from Sin's Dominion, Not Just Hell

Christ saves His people from their sins (Matthew 1:21), meaning salvation involves being freed from sin's lordship and brought under Christ's rule.

Lecture support: Weaver argues that salvation is from sin, not just hell, and that those Christ saves He also rules over.

God Has Already Made Jesus Lord; Humans Cannot Make Him Lord

Acts 2:36 declares that God made Jesus both Lord and Christ; therefore, people are called to recognize and submit to His existing Lordship, not to make Him Lord.

Lecture support: Weaver criticizes the phrase 'make Jesus your Lord,' insisting that God has already done this and humans can only bow to it.

The Early Church's Baptismal Confession Was 'Jesus is Lord'

In the first century, baptism involved confessing 'Jesus is Lord,' which was a politically dangerous act of allegiance to Christ over Caesar.

Lecture support: Weaver states that Christians were executed for refusing to say 'Caesar is Lord' and that baptism meant risking death or confiscation of goods.

Every Person Will Ultimately Confess Christ's Lordship

Philippians 2:9-11 guarantees that every knee will bow and every tongue confess Jesus Christ is Lord, whether in salvation or damnation.

Lecture support: Weaver emphasizes that the question is not 'Will you confess?' but 'When will you confess?' because all will eventually do so.

Scripture References

Romans 10:9

Confessing Jesus as Lord and believing in His resurrection is essential for salvation.

Romans 14:9

Christ died and rose to be Lord of both the dead and the living.

Luke 22:25

Kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship, illustrating the meaning of 'lord' as absolute authority.

Romans 6:12,14

Sin is described as having lordship or dominion over the unregenerate.

Romans 5:14,17

Death reigned from Adam to Moses, showing death's lordship over humanity.

1 Timothy 6:14-15

Jesus Christ is the blessed and only Potentate, King of kings and Lord of lords.

1 Corinthians 12:3

No one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit; the Spirit does not curse Christ.

Genesis 37:1-4

Joseph's brothers could not speak peaceably to him due to hatred, illustrating moral inability.

Luke 6:46-49

Jesus questions why people call Him Lord but do not obey Him; obedience is the evidence of true confession.

Acts 9:3-6

Saul's first words were 'Lord, who art thou?' and his second question was 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?'

John 8:3-11

The woman caught in adultery called Jesus 'Lord,' acknowledging His authority.

Luke 23:39-43

The repentant thief on the cross acknowledged Jesus as Lord, asking to be remembered in His kingdom.

Matthew 28:18

Jesus declared that all authority in heaven and earth has been given to Him.

Matthew 1:21

Jesus will save His people from their sins, not just from hell.

Acts 2:30-36

Peter preached that God made Jesus both Lord and Christ, emphasizing His resurrection and exaltation.

Acts 5:30-31

God exalted Jesus to be a Prince (Ruler) and Savior to give repentance and forgiveness.

Luke 1:46-47

Mary's Magnificat uses poetic parallelism, equating Lord and God my Savior.

Titus 2:13

The Granville Sharp Rule shows 'the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ' are synonymous, affirming Christ's deity.

Acts 10:36

Jesus Christ is Lord of all.

Acts 11:17

Peter reports that Gentiles believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, showing the early church's confession.

Discussion Questions

1. What does it mean to confess Jesus as Lord, and how does that differ from simply saying the words?

Consider: Weaver explains that confession (homolegeo) means agreeing with God about Christ's authority, leading to repentance and obedience.

2. How does the New Testament's emphasis on Jesus as Lord (747 times) shape our understanding of the gospel?

Consider: Weaver contrasts the frequent use of 'Lord' with the rare use of 'Savior' in Acts to show the apostolic focus on Christ's rule.

3. In what ways do modern churches deny Christ's Lordship in practice, even while professing it verbally?

Consider: Weaver cites Luke 6:46 and argues that disobedience, such as incorporating under state authority, denies Christ's headship.

4. Why did the early church's confession 'Jesus is Lord' put them in direct conflict with the Roman Empire?

Consider: Weaver explains that Christians were executed for refusing to say 'Caesar is Lord,' making their baptismal confession politically subversive.

5. How does the truth that every knee will bow and every tongue confess Christ's Lordship affect our evangelism and view of judgment?

Consider: Weaver argues that the question is not 'Will you confess?' but 'When will you confess?' since all will ultimately do so.

6. What are the practical implications of Christ's Lordship for a church's relationship with the state?

Consider: Weaver concludes that if Christ is head, the church cannot submit to government jurisdiction through incorporation or 501(c)(3) status.

Applications

Examine Your Confession of Christ's Lordship

Evaluate whether your verbal confession of Jesus as Lord is matched by practical obedience and submission to His authority in all areas of life.

Lecture support: Weaver uses Luke 6:46 to challenge those who call Jesus 'Lord' but do not do what He says, emphasizing that genuine faith produces obedience.

Reject Incorporation and 501(c)(3) Status

Churches should refuse to incorporate or seek 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status because these actions place the church under state jurisdiction, compromising Christ's sole headship.

Lecture support: Weaver reviews court cases and legal arguments showing that incorporation submits the church to Caesar's rules, and 501(c)(3) prohibits preaching against public policy.

Obey Christ Regardless of Government Pressure

Believers must obey Christ as their ultimate King, even when it means defying government decrees, following the example of the early church.

Lecture support: Acts 17:6-7 shows early Christians were accused of acting contrary to Caesar's decrees because they acknowledged Jesus as King.

Preach Christ's Lordship, Not Just His Saviorhood

Evangelism and teaching should emphasize Jesus as Lord, not merely as Savior, because salvation includes deliverance from sin's dominion and submission to Christ's rule.

Lecture support: Weaver notes that apostolic preaching called Jesus Lord 92 times in Acts but Savior only twice, and Matthew 1:21 says He saves from sins.

Study notes

Personal Application and Notes

Which application will you work on, and what specific step will you take?

What Scripture or teaching will you return to as you put this into practice?

Additional notes or questions to discuss

Online Lecture Resources

Scan a code or select the lecture link in the PDF. The original lecture identifiers and destinations are preserved.

Lesson 1: The Church & Incorporation - 1

Lecture JW01157

Open the formatted lecture online

https://weaverbiblecollege.com/transcript.php?library=weaverbiblecollege&lecture=JW01157&transcript=ai&pc_view=formatted

Lesson 2: The Church & Incorporation - 2

Lecture JW01156

Open the formatted lecture online

https://weaverbiblecollege.com/transcript.php?library=weaverbiblecollege&lecture=JW01156&transcript=ai&pc_view=formatted

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Source information

Study material: existing Major Themes, Key Arguments, Scripture References, Discussion Questions, and Applications from the corresponding Weaver Bible College lecture records. Original lecture titles and provenance are retained in those source records.

Layout upgraded September 30, 2026. Original manuscripts, study-guide data, and previous PDFs have not been changed.