

# Dr. Robert Peterson, Johannine Theology, Session 4, The Structure of the Gospel of John Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

## **1. Abstract of Peterson, Johannine Theology, Session 4, The Structure of the Gospel of John, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL**

Dr. Robert A. Peterson's Johannine Theology, Session 4, focuses on the structural framework of the Gospel of John. The lecture begins with prayer and then outlines the generally accepted divisions: the prologue (1:1-18), the Book of Signs (1:19-12:50), the Book of Glory (13:1-20:31), and the epilogue (21:1-25). Peterson justifies these divisions by examining the prologue's introduction of key themes like rejection and acceptance of Jesus, which he argues foreshadow the contrasting responses presented in the Book of Signs and the Book of Glory. He analyzes specific verses within the prologue, such as John 1:1 and verses 10-13, to support this structural interpretation. Furthermore, the session explores the significance of the "signs" in the first major section, connecting them to the revelation of Jesus' glory, particularly highlighting the first and seventh signs. Peterson also discusses the identity and role of John the Baptist as a witness in relation to these initial structural elements.

**2. 20 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Peterson, Johannine Theology, Session 4 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (New Testament → Gospels → John).**



**Peterson\_JnTheology\_Session04.mp3**

### 3. Briefing Document: Peterson, Johannine Theology, Session 4, The Structure of the Gospel of John

#### Briefing Document: The Structure of the Gospel of John (Dr. Robert A. Peterson)

**Main Theme:** This session by Dr. Robert A. Peterson focuses on the structural divisions of the Gospel of John and how these divisions contribute to understanding the overarching themes and purpose of the book. Peterson outlines the Gospel's structure as Prologue, Book of Signs, Book of Glory, and Epilogue, providing justification for these breaks based on content, audience, and thematic development.

#### Key Ideas and Facts:

##### 1. Overall Structure:

- The Gospel of John is generally agreed to have a **prologue (1:1-18)** and an **epilogue (21:1-25)**.
- The main body of the Gospel is divided into two parts: the **Book of Signs (1:19-12:50)** and the **Book of Glory (13:1-20:31)**.
- Peterson notes that the Book of Signs might begin at 1:19 (the testimony of John the Baptist) or possibly later at the first sign in chapter 2. He favors 1:19.
- The break between the Book of Signs and the Book of Glory is strongly indicated by the shift in audience (world vs. disciples) and the nature of Jesus' actions and teachings.

##### 2. The Prologue (John 1:1-18):

- The prologue introduces many key themes of John's Gospel.
- There is a clear break between verse 18 (no one has ever seen God; the only God who is at the Father's side has made him known) and verse 19 (the testimony of John the Baptist).
- The prologue highlights the initial responses to Jesus:
- **Negative Rejection (1:10-11):** "He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own home, and his own people did not receive him." Peterson emphasizes translating "his own" in verse 11 as "his own home," referencing the created world and potentially Israel. "His own people" clearly refers to Israel.

- **Positive Reception (1:12-13):** "But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God." Peterson stresses that receiving and believing in Christ's name are equivalent and lead to being born of God, a theme expanded in chapter 3.
- **The Word (Logos):** Peterson argues that John's concept of the Word originates from Genesis 1 (God's spoken word in creation) rather than Hellenistic philosophy. He highlights the deity of the Word ("the Word was God") and its role as the Father's agent in creation ("All things were made through him"). He refutes interpretations that translate "God" as "a god" in John 1:1, attributing this to a denial of Christ's deity.
- **Life and Light:** "In him was life, and the life was the light of men" (1:4). Peterson identifies "Zoe" as always meaning eternal life in John's Gospel. The light shining in darkness (1:5) represents God's general revelation, which the darkness (representing the world's opposition) tries to extinguish.
- **John the Baptist as Witness:** John the Baptist's role is emphasized as a witness to the light (Jesus), not the light himself (1:7-8). Peterson notes that unlike the Synoptics, John's Gospel focuses on the Baptist's testimony rather than his baptism for the forgiveness of sins. God deliberately prevented John the Baptist from performing signs (John 10:41) to avoid confusion with the Messiah.
- **The True Light Coming into the World (1:9):** Peterson critiques the KJV translation, arguing that the verse describes the true light "that was coming into the world" (a periphrastic construction indicating the incarnation) rather than continuously enlightening every person from birth (as used to support prevenient grace). The true light illuminates those with whom Jesus comes into contact historically.
- **Incarnation and Glory (1:14):** "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth." The incarnation is a temporary dwelling ("tabernacled"). Glory is introduced as a significant theme, linked to the Old Testament concepts of God's loving-kindness (hesed) and faithfulness ('emet).
- **Pre-existence of Christ (1:15):** John the Baptist's statement, "The one who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me," affirms the pre-existence of the eternal Word.

- **Grace upon Grace (1:16-17):** "For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." The abundance of grace through Christ surpasses the law given through Moses.
- **Making God Known (1:18):** "No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known." Peterson discusses the interpretation of "at the Father's side," suggesting it indicates both the Son's deep love from the Father and potentially an ontological reality. He emphasizes the importance of context (concentric circles of biblical text) in interpreting such passages and understanding figurative language like hyperbole and irony.

### 3. The Book of Signs (John 1:19-12:50):

- This section is characterized by seven specific signs or miracles performed by Jesus.
- These signs are not merely displays of power but reveal who Jesus is and point to his glory.
- The seven signs (identified by Peterson):
  1. Water to wine (chapter 2)
  2. Healing the officer's son (chapter 4)
  3. Healing the lame man (chapter 5)
  4. Feeding the 5,000 (chapter 6)
  5. Jesus walking on water (chapter 6)
  6. Healing the blind man (chapter 9)
  7. Raising Lazarus from the dead (chapter 11)
- Scholars relate these signs to the plagues in Exodus, which judged Egyptian gods and revealed Yahweh's true nature. Similarly, John's signs reveal the deity of the Son.
- The Book of Signs is framed by the manifestation of Jesus' glory in the first sign (Cana - John 2:11: "This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him") and the seventh sign (raising Lazarus - John 11:4: "This illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it"). Peterson emphasizes

the link between belief and seeing God's glory (John 11:40: "Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?"").

- The Book of Signs ends with unbelief despite the many signs performed (summarized in 12:37: "Though he had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him"). This negative response echoes the rejection in the prologue (1:10-11).

#### **4. The Book of Glory (John 13:1-20:31):**

- This section begins with the Last Supper ("Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end" - 13:1).
- The audience shifts from the world (especially the Jewish world) to Jesus' disciples in the upper room.
- The focus shifts from signs to Jesus' words and teachings, including the farewell discourses (chapters 13-16) about the Holy Spirit, his departure, and persecution.
- It includes the High Priestly Prayer (chapter 17), Jesus' arrest (chapter 18), crucifixion (chapter 19), and resurrection (chapter 20).
- Jesus explicitly states in chapter 17 that he is praying for his disciples, not the world ("I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours" - 17:9), highlighting the distinct audience.
- The Book of Glory ends with the stated purpose of the Gospel (20:30-31), which contrasts with the unbelief at the end of the Book of Signs: "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." This positive outcome of belief and eternal life corresponds to the positive reception in the prologue (1:12-13).

#### **5. The Epilogue (John 21:1-25):**

- This section describes the third appearance of Jesus to his disciples after his resurrection.
- It includes the miraculous catch of fish and Jesus' interaction with Peter, leading to Peter's threefold repentance matching his threefold denial.

- The epilogue is considered separate from the main purpose stated in 20:30-31.

**Significance:**

Understanding the structure of John's Gospel, as outlined by Peterson, provides a framework for interpreting individual passages within their broader context. The division into the Book of Signs and the Book of Glory highlights the different phases of Jesus' ministry and the intended responses to him (unbelief from the world despite signs, and belief and understanding from his disciples through his teachings and ultimate glorification). The prologue acts as an introduction to these themes and the overall narrative arc of the Gospel.

## 4. Study Guide: Peterson, Johannine Theology, Session 4, The Structure of the Gospel of John

### Study Guide: The Structure of the Gospel of John

#### Quiz

1. According to Peterson, what are the four main sections of John's Gospel and what are their corresponding chapter and verse ranges?
2. What is the primary audience of the Book of Signs and how does it differ from the primary audience of the Book of Glory?
3. What is the significance of the statements found in John 12:37 and John 20:30-31 in relation to the structure and purpose of John's Gospel?
4. Explain how the prologue of John's Gospel (John 1:1-18) introduces the overarching themes and the division of the book.
5. What are the seven signs listed by Peterson in the Book of Signs, and why are they referred to as "signs"?
6. How does Peterson interpret the phrase "He came to his own home, and his own people did not receive him" in John 1:11?
7. What is the significance of John the Baptist in the prologue (John 1:6-8, 15) according to Peterson, and how does John's Gospel emphasize his role?
8. Explain Peterson's understanding of John 1:1 and the phrase "the Word was God," addressing the common misinterpretation raised by some groups.
9. How do the first sign (water to wine in Cana, John 2) and the seventh sign (the raising of Lazarus, John 11) specifically relate to the theme of Jesus' glory?
10. What distinguishes the Book of Glory from the Book of Signs in terms of content and focus, and what major events are included in the Book of Glory?

#### Answer Key

1. The four main sections are the Prologue (John 1:1-18), the Book of Signs (John 1:19-12:50), the Book of Glory (John 13:1-20:31), and the Epilogue (John 21:1-25).

2. The primary audience of the Book of Signs is the world, especially the Jewish world where Jesus ministered. In contrast, the primary audience of the Book of Glory is Jesus' disciples in the upper room.
3. These parallel statements indicate the two main sections of John's Gospel. John 12:37 summarizes the unbelief in response to Jesus' signs in the Book of Signs, while John 20:30-31 states the purpose of the Gospel: that readers might believe and have eternal life.
4. The prologue introduces the themes of light and darkness, belief and unbelief, and the incarnation of the Word. The negative response to Jesus in 1:10-11 foreshadows the Book of Signs' reception, and the positive response in 1:12-13 anticipates the belief described at the end of the Book of Glory.
5. The seven signs are: water to wine, healing the officer's son, healing the lame man, feeding the 5,000, walking on water, healing the blind man, and raising Lazarus. They are called "signs" because they reveal Jesus' identity and glory.
6. Peterson interprets "his own home" as a possible reference to the world he created or specifically to Israel, the covenant people. "His own people" plainly refers to Israel, highlighting their initial rejection of Jesus.
7. Peterson emphasizes John the Baptist's role as a witness to the light (Jesus), not the light himself. John's Gospel highlights his testimony to prepare the way for Jesus and clarifies that he was not the Messiah, the prophet, or Elijah in the way some expected.
8. Peterson explains that "the Word was God" (John 1:1) affirms the deity of Christ and should not be translated as "a god" due to consistency in John's usage of "God" without the article and to avoid denying Christ's deity, which stems from prior theological commitments.
9. The first sign at Cana manifested Jesus' glory, leading his disciples to begin to believe in him. The seventh sign, the raising of Lazarus, is also associated with the revelation of God's glory, as Jesus tells Martha that if she believed, she would see the glory of God.
10. The Book of Glory shifts focus from Jesus' signs to his words and teaching for his disciples in the upper room before his crucifixion. It includes the farewell discourses, the high priestly prayer, his arrest, crucifixion, and resurrection, emphasizing his glory in his departure and triumph over death.



## Essay Format Questions

1. Analyze the structural significance of the prologue (John 1:1-18) in relation to the two main divisions of John's Gospel: the Book of Signs and the Book of Glory. How do the themes and responses presented in the prologue foreshadow the content and purpose of these subsequent sections?
2. Discuss the role and significance of the "signs" in the first half of John's Gospel (the Book of Signs). How do these miracles function not just as displays of power, but as revelations of Jesus' identity and glory? Consider specific examples and their intended impact on the audience.
3. Compare and contrast the Book of Signs (John 1:19-12:50) and the Book of Glory (John 13:1-20:31) in terms of their audience, content, and primary themes. How does this structural division contribute to the overall message and purpose of John's Gospel?
4. Examine the presentation of John the Baptist in the prologue (John 1:6-8, 15) and the early chapters of John's Gospel. How does the evangelist portray his role as a witness, and why is it crucial to understanding Jesus' identity and mission as presented in this Gospel?
5. Evaluate the overarching purpose of John's Gospel as indicated by its structure and the statements in John 12:37 and John 20:30-31. How do the Book of Signs and the Book of Glory contribute to achieving this purpose, and what does this tell us about the intended impact on the reader?

## Glossary of Key Terms

- **Prologue:** The introductory section of John's Gospel (John 1:1-18) that introduces key themes, the identity of Jesus, and the structure of the book.
- **Epilogue:** The concluding section of John's Gospel (John 21:1-25) that describes Jesus' post-resurrection appearance to his disciples and his interaction with Peter.
- **Book of Signs:** The first major division of John's Gospel (John 1:19-12:50) that focuses on seven miraculous signs performed by Jesus, intended to reveal his identity and call for belief.
- **Book of Glory:** The second major division of John's Gospel (John 13:1-20:31) that focuses on Jesus' final hours with his disciples, his crucifixion, and his resurrection, emphasizing his glory in his suffering and triumph.
- **Sign:** In John's Gospel, a miracle performed by Jesus that has a deeper meaning and points to his divine identity and the kingdom of God.
- **Witness:** A key theme in John's Gospel, referring to individuals who testify to the truth about Jesus, such as John the Baptist, the disciples, and the signs themselves.
- **Logos:** A Greek term used in the prologue of John's Gospel (John 1:1) to refer to the Word, understood as the divine expression and agent of God in creation and revelation, identified with Jesus Christ.
- **Incarnation:** The act by which the eternal Son of God (the Word) became human in the person of Jesus Christ (John 1:14).
- **Glory:** A central theme in John's Gospel, referring to the divine splendor and majesty of God, manifested in Jesus' words, deeds, suffering, and resurrection.
- **Believe (pisteuo):** The primary response called for in John's Gospel, signifying trust in and commitment to Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, leading to eternal life.

## 5. FAQs on Peterson, Johannine Theology, Session 4, The Structure of the Gospel of John, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

### Frequently Asked Questions about the Structure and Themes of the Gospel of John

**1. How is the Gospel of John structurally divided, and what are the key sections?** The Gospel of John has a generally agreed-upon structure consisting of a Prologue (1:1-18), the Book of Signs (1:19-12:50), the Book of Glory (13:1-20:31), and an Epilogue (21:1-25). The Prologue introduces many of the Gospel's key themes. The Book of Signs recounts seven specific miracles of Jesus. The Book of Glory focuses on Jesus' final hours with his disciples, his crucifixion, and resurrection. The Epilogue describes a post-resurrection appearance of Jesus to his disciples.

**2. What is the significance of the Prologue (John 1:1-18)?** The Prologue is crucial as it introduces fundamental themes that are developed throughout the Gospel. It establishes the divine nature of the "Word" (Logos) as being with God and as God, the agent of creation, and the source of life and light. It also highlights the initial rejection of Jesus by the world despite his coming into it, and the positive response of those who believe in him, receiving the right to become children of God. This contrast between rejection and acceptance foreshadows the structure and purpose of the rest of the Gospel.

**3. What is the purpose of the "Book of Signs" (John 1:19-12:50), and what characterizes this section?** The Book of Signs presents seven miraculous acts performed by Jesus, which are intended to serve as "signs" revealing his identity and glory. These signs, such as turning water into wine, healing the sick, feeding the multitude, and raising Lazarus, are not merely displays of power but point to Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God. Despite these signs, this section culminates with widespread unbelief among the Jewish people, as highlighted in 12:37.

**4. How does the "Book of Glory" (John 13:1-20:31) differ in focus and audience from the "Book of Signs"?** The Book of Glory marks a shift in focus from Jesus' public ministry and signs to his private teaching and interactions with his disciples in the upper room before his crucifixion. The audience shifts from "the world," particularly the Jewish world, to his chosen disciples. This section emphasizes Jesus' love for his own, his farewell discourses, the promise of the Holy Spirit, his high priestly prayer, his arrest, crucifixion, and ultimately, his glorious resurrection. The theme shifts from demonstrating his identity through signs to revealing the meaning of his departure and glorification.

**5. What is the significance of the seven signs in the Gospel of John, and what might they be compared to in the Old Testament?** The seven signs in John's Gospel are significant because they are deliberately chosen to reveal Jesus' glory and call people to believe in him. They are not exhaustive of all the miracles Jesus performed, as John explicitly states (20:30). These signs can be compared to the plagues in the book of Exodus, which not only judged the Egyptian gods but also revealed Yahweh as the true and living God. Similarly, John's signs point to the deity of Jesus.

**6. How does the Gospel of John emphasize belief and faith? Does it use the same terminology for both?** John's Gospel places a strong emphasis on belief (*pisteuo*) as the means by which one receives eternal life and becomes a child of God. While John frequently uses the verb "believe," he rarely uses the noun form "faith" (*pistis*). Believing "him" is presented as trusting in him as Savior, distinct from merely believing "him" to be truthful. The Gospel highlights that receiving Christ and believing in his name are essentially the same act, leading to the right to become children of God (1:12).

**7. What is the role of John the Baptist in the Gospel of John, and how does it differ from his portrayal in the synoptic gospels?** In John's Gospel, John the Baptist is primarily presented as a witness to the light, Jesus Christ. The emphasis is on his testimony, pointing others to Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (1:29). Unlike the synoptic gospels, John's Gospel does not focus on John the Baptist's message of repentance for the forgiveness of sins or the act of baptism in the Jordan as much as his role as a divinely sent witness whose purpose is to direct attention to Jesus. Notably, John 10:41 states that John performed no signs, emphasizing his role as a speaker of God's word.

**8. How does the Prologue provide an outline for the rest of the Gospel of John?** The Prologue of John (1:1-18) lays the groundwork for the entire Gospel by presenting the initial responses to Jesus: rejection (1:10-11) and acceptance (1:12-13). The negative response foreshadows the unbelief seen at the end of the Book of Signs (12:37-43), while the positive response anticipates the purpose stated at the conclusion of the Book of Glory (20:30-31), which is that people might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and have life in his name. The Prologue thus introduces the central conflict and the ultimate aim of the Gospel.