

# Dr. Robert Peterson, Johannine Theology, Session 15, God's People Resources from NotebookLM

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

## 1. Abstract of Peterson, Johannine Theology, Session 15, God's People, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

**Dr. Robert A. Peterson's session on Johannine theology, specifically "God's People," explores the New Testament understanding of the church as presented in the Gospel of John.** The lecture refutes the idea that John's Gospel lacks ecclesiastical interest, highlighting prominent themes related to God's people. **Peterson outlines seven pictures of the church in John:** those worshiping in spirit and truth, saved by the Father and Son, sheep of the Good Shepherd, followers of Jesus' example, branches abiding in the vine, objects of Jesus' high priestly prayer, and those commissioned with the gospel. **The session draws connections between John's portrayal of God's people and Old Testament concepts, as well as comparisons to Pauline theology.** Ultimately, the lecture emphasizes that the church in John is defined by its relationship with Christ and the Trinity, characterized by unity, holiness, universality, and apostolic foundations.

**2. 26 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Peterson, Johannine Theology, Session 15 – 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\_Session15.mp3**

### 3. Briefing Document: Peterson, Johannine Theology, Session 15, God's People

#### Briefing Document: Johannine Theology - God's People (Session 15)

**Overview:** This briefing document summarizes Dr. Robert A. Peterson's lecture on the Johannine understanding of "God's People," essentially John's doctrine of the church. Peterson argues against the notion that John's Gospel lacks ecclesiological interest, asserting that while the term "church" (ecclesia) is absent, the reality of belonging to God's people is richly present through various themes and pictures centered on the person and work of Christ. The lecture explores seven key depictions of God's people in John's Gospel.

#### Main Themes and Important Ideas/Facts:

##### 1. The Prominence of Ecclesiological Themes in John:

- Peterson directly refutes Rudolf Bultmann's claim of no specific ecclesiastical interest in John's Gospel.
- He quotes Robert Kysar, stating that "**the ecclesiological themes of the fourth gospel are prominent and important in the total picture of the evangelist's thought.**"
- D.A. Carson is cited emphasizing that "**the elements of what it means to belong to the people of God, what it means, in fact, to be the church, are richly present, including much on the church's election, life, origin, nature, witness, suffering, fruit bearing, prayer, and unity.**"
- Peterson emphasizes that John's understanding of God's people is intrinsically linked to his "**overwhelming interest in the person and work of Christ.**"

##### 2. Seven Pictures of the Church in John:

Peterson outlines seven key ways John portrays God's people:

- **Those worshiping the Father in spirit and truth (John 4:21-26, 39-42):**
- This is illustrated through Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman.
- Worship is no longer tied to a specific location but is spiritual and according to God's revealed truth.
- The passage reveals God's dealing with individuals and groups.

- Stephen Smalley's observation is noted: **"the theology of the church in John is nicely balanced between the one and the many."**
- This episode highlights the expanded vision of God's people beyond Israel to include groups like the Samaritans, emphasizing Jesus as the savior of the world.
- True worshippers **"worship the Father in spirit and truth."** (John 4:24)
- **Those saved by the Father and the Son (John 6:35-40):**
- Jesus' "bread of life" discourse identifies God's people with those saved by the Father and the Son.
- Peterson draws parallels between John's language and Paul's teaching on salvation (e.g., Romans 8:29-30), noting similarities in concepts like the Father giving people to the Son (akin to predestination), the Father drawing them (akin to calling), and people coming to Jesus (believing).
- John emphasizes that **"Everyone the Father gives me will come to me, and the one who comes to me I will never cast out."** (John 6:37)
- John highlights the continuity of God's people from the Father's choice to the Son's raising them on the last day.
- Peterson clarifies that while the Holy Spirit isn't explicitly mentioned in this passage, other Johannine texts (e.g., John 3:8, 14:16-17) indicate the Spirit's role in regeneration and abiding with believers.
- **The sheep of the Good Shepherd (John 10:1-16):**
- This metaphor, rooted in Old Testament passages like Ezekiel 34 and Jeremiah 23, portrays Jesus as the Good Shepherd and believers as his sheep.
- Jesus distinguishes himself from "thieves and robbers" (John 10:8), referring to false shepherds of Israel.
- The Good Shepherd **"lays down his life for the sheep."** (John 10:11, 15).
- Jesus is also presented as the gate: **"I am the gate. If anyone enters by me, he'll be saved and will come in and go out and find pasture."** (John 10:7).
- Colin Cruz's insight highlights the security and provision offered by Jesus.

- The mutual knowledge between the shepherd and the sheep signifies an intimate, covenantal relationship, reflecting the Father-Son relationship: **"I'm the good shepherd, I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father."** (John 10:14-15).
- John 10 also points to the universality and unity of God's people, including Gentile believers: **"But I have other sheep that are not from this sheep pen. I must bring them also, and they'll listen to my voice. Then there'll be one flock, one shepherd."** (John 10:16). Leon Morris emphasizes the unity of Jewish and Gentile believers in one flock under one shepherd.
- **Those following Jesus' example (John 13:15-17):**
  - Jesus' washing of the disciples' feet in John 13 serves as a powerful example of humble service.
  - The act signifies both spiritual cleansing (initially misunderstood by the disciples) and the importance of serving one another.
  - Jesus states, **"For I have given you an example that you also should do just as I have done for you."** (John 13:15).
  - Peterson clarifies that this isn't the institution of a church ordinance but a demonstration of the attitude believers should have, echoing Jesus' teaching in Mark 10:43-45 about servanthood.
  - Morris emphasizes that believers **"are not to stand on their dignity or think too highly of themselves."**
- **Branches abiding in the vine (John 15:1-6):**
  - Using the Old Testament imagery of Israel as God's vineyard (e.g., Isaiah 5), Jesus declares, **"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener."** (John 15:1).
  - Believers, as branches, receive life from Jesus and are expected to bear good and lasting fruit.
  - Failure to bear fruit results in being **"removed"** (John 15:2), which Peterson, drawing on Cruz's understanding of ancient viticulture, connects to the autumn pruning and judgment for those who profess faith but show no evidence of it.
  - Fruit-bearing branches are **"pruned so that it will produce more fruit."** (John 15:2).

- Abiding in Jesus is crucial for bearing fruit: "**Abide in me, and I in you. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me.**" (John 15:4).
- Abiding involves keeping Jesus' word, resulting in answered prayer and glory to the Father through their fruit (John 15:7-8).
- Abiding also means abiding in Jesus' love and obeying his commands: "**As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love.**" (John 15:9).
- Abiding produces joy and love for fellow believers.
- While emphasizing the responsibility to abide and bear fruit, Jesus also highlights divine sovereignty in election: "**You did not choose me, but I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce fruit, and that your fruit should remain.**" (John 15:16).
- **Objects of Jesus' high priestly prayer (John 17:17-23):**
- Jesus' prayer in John 17 includes prayers for himself, his current disciples, and future believers.
- He prays for their sanctification through the truth: "**Sanctify them by the truth. Your word is truth.**" (John 17:17). Peterson notes the two senses of sanctification here: Jesus' consecration for atonement and the believers' sanctification from sin through the application of God's word.
- Jesus prays for the unity of believers, mirroring the unity between the Father and the Son: "**that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.**" (John 17:21).
- He has given them the glory the Father gave him "**that they may be one even as we are one**" (John 17:22).
- Jesus prays that believers will eventually be with him to see his glory (John 17:24).
- Peterson highlights that this prayer reveals the four attributes of the church (one, holy, catholic/universal, and apostolic) based on the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed.
- The prayer also touches on the doctrine of the Trinity's perichoresis and the believers' participation in this mutual indwelling.

- **Those commissioned with the gospel (John 20:19-23):**
- After his resurrection, Jesus appears to his disciples and commissions them: "**As the Father has sent me, I also send you.**" (John 20:21).
- He breathes on them and says, "**Receive the Holy Spirit.**" (John 20:22), symbolizing God's empowering presence for their mission.
- They are given the authority regarding forgiveness of sins: "**If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness, it is withheld.**" (John 20:23), indicating their role in proclaiming the gospel and its consequences.
- This highlights the role of God's people in carrying the life-giving message of the gospel to the world through the power of the Holy Spirit.

### **Conclusion:**

Dr. Peterson concludes that John's Gospel presents a rich and significant understanding of God's people, even without using the specific term "church." This understanding is deeply rooted in the person and work of Jesus Christ and is expressed through various vivid pictures that highlight their worship, salvation through the Trinity, relationship with the Good Shepherd and True Vine, call to humble service, inclusion in Jesus' high priestly prayer, and commission to spread the gospel. John's perspective offers a blessing to both his original audience and believers throughout history.

## 4. Study Guide: Peterson, Johannine Theology, Session 15, God's People

### A Study Guide to Johannine Theology: God's People

#### Quiz:

1. According to Dr. Peterson, despite Rudolf Bultmann's claim, what evidence suggests that the Gospel of John does indeed have an interest in the New Testament people of God?
2. Explain the significance of Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman in John 4 in relation to the identity of God's people in the New Testament.
3. How does John's account of Jesus as the "bread of life" in John 6 describe the Father and the Son's role in the salvation of God's people? Provide one specific parallel Dr. Peterson draws between John 6 and Paul's teaching in Romans 8.
4. In John 10, Jesus refers to himself as the Good Shepherd and his followers as sheep. Describe two key aspects of this metaphor in relation to the nature and security of God's people.
5. What was the significance of Jesus washing his disciples' feet in John 13, and how does this act define an aspect of what it means to be part of God's people?
6. In John 15, Jesus uses the analogy of the vine and the branches. Explain the meaning of "abiding" in this context and what it signifies for the relationship between believers and Jesus.
7. According to John 17, what are at least two specific things Jesus prays for on behalf of his present and future followers?
8. Dr. Peterson mentions four attributes of the church found in Jesus' high priestly prayer in John 17, drawing from the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed. Name two of these attributes and briefly explain how they are evident in the chapter.
9. Describe the event in John 20 where Jesus commissions his disciples after his resurrection and how this event relates to the ongoing identity and mission of God's people.
10. According to the lecture, what is the central "glue" that holds together John's teaching on the church?

#### Answer Key:

1. Robert Kysar argues that ecclesiological themes are prominent and important in John's thought. Additionally, D.A. Carson insists that the elements of belonging to God's people, or being the church, are richly present, covering aspects like election, life, origin, and unity, even though the word "church" itself is absent.
2. Jesus' interaction with the Samaritan woman and her community demonstrates that God's people in the New Testament will include those beyond traditional Jewish boundaries. It highlights that true worship is not tied to a specific location but occurs "in spirit and truth," and it shows God's dealing with both individuals and groups.
3. In John 6, the Father gives people to the Son, and the Son gives them eternal life and will raise them up on the last day, illustrating their roles in salvation. A parallel with Romans 8 is that the Father giving people to the Son in John is akin to Paul's concept of predestination.
4. As the Good Shepherd, Jesus lays down his life for his sheep, demonstrating his sacrificial love and care. He is also the gate, providing the means for the sheep to enter the fold and find security and provision, signifying the eternal security of believers.
5. Jesus washing his disciples' feet was an act of humble service, meant to be an example for his followers. This act defines the people of God as those who, recognizing Jesus as their teacher and Lord, should also humbly serve one another, not exalting themselves.
6. "Abiding" in the vine signifies a deep, vital, and ongoing union and fellowship with Jesus, the true vine. It is through this abiding relationship that believers receive life from Christ and are enabled to bear good and lasting spiritual fruit for God.
7. In John 17, Jesus prays for the protection and unity of his followers. He asks the Father to keep them safe in his name and prays that they would be one, even as the Father and the Son are one, so that the world might believe.
8. Two attributes are unity and holiness. Unity is evident in Jesus' prayer that his followers would be one (verses 11, 21-23). Holiness is seen in his prayer for their sanctification through the truth of God's word and his own consecration for their sake (verses 17-19).
9. After his resurrection, Jesus appeared to his disciples, breathed on them, and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit," commissioning them as he was commissioned by



the Father ("As the Father has sent me, so I send you"). This signifies that God's people are those sent out with the Holy Spirit's power to proclaim the message of forgiveness and life.

10. The central "glue" that holds together John's teaching on the church is his "overwhelming interest in the person and work of Christ." All aspects of his ecclesiology are understood through the lens of who Jesus is and what he has done.

### **Essay Format Questions:**

1. Discuss the significance of the Old Testament background and allusions in John's portrayal of God's people, using specific examples such as the Good Shepherd (John 10) and the True Vine (John 15).
2. Analyze how John's Gospel presents the relationship between the Father and the Son in the salvation and formation of God's people, drawing from passages like John 6 and John 17.
3. Explore the practical implications of Jesus' teachings and actions in John's Gospel (such as the encounter with the Samaritan woman and the washing of the disciples' feet) for understanding the nature and mission of the church.
4. Examine the theme of unity within the New Testament people of God as presented in John's Gospel, particularly in Jesus' high priestly prayer in John 17 and the imagery of one flock and one shepherd in John 10.
5. Evaluate Dr. Peterson's assertion that despite the absence of the word "church," John's Gospel displays a significant interest in the New Testament people of God, providing textual evidence from the passages discussed.

## Glossary of Key Terms:

- **Ecclesiology:** The branch of theology concerned with the nature and constitution of the church.
- **Johannine Theology:** The specific theological themes and perspectives found in the Gospel of John and the Johannine Epistles.
- **Antitype:** A New Testament reality that corresponds to and fulfills an Old Testament type or shadow.
- **High Priestly Prayer:** The prayer of Jesus recorded in John 17, often referred to as his intercessory prayer for himself, his disciples, and future believers.
- **Perichoresis (Circumincession):** A theological concept describing the mutual indwelling and interpenetration of the three persons of the Trinity.
- **Apostolic Doctrine:** The teachings and beliefs of the apostles, which serve as the foundation of Christian faith.
- **Sanctification:** The process of being made holy or set apart for God's purposes. In John 17, it refers both to Jesus' consecration for his mission and the setting apart of believers through the truth.
- **Justification:** The act by which God declares a sinner righteous in his sight through faith in Jesus Christ. While not a primary term in John as in Paul, its results (like eternal life) are present.
- **Regeneration:** The spiritual rebirth or renewal of a person by the Holy Spirit, giving them a new nature and the ability to believe.
- **Covenant:** A solemn agreement between God and humanity (or specific people), establishing a relationship with mutual obligations and promises. In John 10 and 15, the relationship between Jesus and his followers has covenantal aspects.

## 5. FAQs on Peterson, Johannine Theology, Session 15, God's People, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

### Frequently Asked Questions on the Johannine Doctrine of God's People

**1. Although the term "church" (ecclesia) is absent in the Gospel of John, does John present a concept of God's people?** Yes, despite not using the specific word "church," the Gospel of John extensively addresses the reality of the New Testament people of God. Scholars like Robert Kysar and D.A. Carson affirm the prominence and importance of ecclesiological themes in John's thought. Carson points out that the elements of belonging to God's people are richly present, covering aspects like election, life, origin, nature, witness, suffering, fruit-bearing, prayer, and unity.

**2. What is the central unifying theme that underpins John's understanding of God's people?** The overwhelming interest in the person and work of Christ serves as the glue that holds together John's diverse depictions and teachings on God's people. Just as it unifies other aspects of his gospel, John's ecclesiology is fundamentally Christocentric. The identity and characteristics of God's people are consistently defined in relation to Jesus.

**3. What are some of the key metaphorical "pictures" John uses to illustrate the nature of God's people?** John employs several vivid metaphors to portray God's people. These include: \* **Those worshipping the Father in spirit and truth:** Emphasizing a transformed and authentic mode of worship not tied to a specific location but rooted in God's nature and revealed word. \* **Those saved by the Father and the Son:** Highlighting the Trinitarian involvement in salvation, with the Father choosing and drawing individuals to the Son, who grants them eternal life and secures their resurrection. \* **The sheep of the Good Shepherd:** Depicting Jesus as the caring leader who lays down his life for his sheep, providing safety, pasture, and eternal life, while also uniting both Jewish and Gentile believers into one flock. \* **Those following Jesus' example:** Underscoring the importance of humble service and mutual love, exemplified by Jesus' washing of his disciples' feet, as a defining characteristic of his followers. \* **Branches abiding in the vine:** Illustrating the vital and dependent relationship believers have with Jesus, the true vine, from whom they receive life and the capacity to bear spiritual fruit, with the Father as the gardener who prunes for greater fruitfulness and removes fruitless branches. \* **Those who are objects of Jesus' high priestly prayer:** Revealing Jesus' intercession for his followers, praying for their protection, unity, sanctification in truth, and ultimate glorification with him, highlighting the intimate relationship between the Father, Son,

and believers. \* **Those commissioned with the gospel:** Presenting believers as those sent by Jesus, empowered by the Holy Spirit, to proclaim the life-giving message of forgiveness to the world.

**4. How does John's portrayal of God's people connect with the Old Testament?** John frequently alludes to the Old Testament, often presenting Jesus as the true fulfillment of Old Testament realities and types. For instance, Jesus as the Good Shepherd echoes the Old Testament imagery of God as the shepherd of Israel (Ezekiel 34). Similarly, the metaphor of the vine (John 15) draws upon the Old Testament concept of Israel as God's vineyard (Isaiah 5), with Jesus being presented as the "true vine" that fulfills and surpasses the Old Testament type.

**5. What does John teach about the unity of God's people?** Unity is a significant theme in John's understanding of God's people. Jesus prays explicitly for the unity of his followers, comparing it to the unity between the Father and the Son (John 17). This unity is meant to be so compelling that it convinces the world of Jesus' divine mission. The image of the Good Shepherd also emphasizes unity, with Jesus bringing "other sheep" (Gentile believers) into one flock with the Jewish believers under one shepherd.

**6. What role does the Holy Spirit play in John's doctrine of God's people, even if not explicitly mentioned in every context?** While John's Gospel often focuses on the Father and the Son in the context of salvation and the definition of God's people (especially in John 6), the Holy Spirit is indeed crucial. As highlighted in the farewell discourses (John 13-16) and the commissioning of the disciples (John 20), the Spirit regenerates God's people, abides with and in believers forever, empowers them for their witness, and guides them in their mission to bring the gospel to the world, resulting in the offer or withholding of forgiveness.

**7. How does John address the concept of election in relation to God's people?** John presents the theme of divine election in several ways. The Father giving people to the Son (John 6:37) is a key aspect, akin to predestination. The Father also draws people to the Son (John 6:44), parallel to the concept of calling. Furthermore, in John 15:16, Jesus states, "You did not choose me, but I chose you," emphasizing his sovereign initiative in selecting his disciples for both salvation and fruit-bearing.

**8. What are the implications of John's teachings on God's people for believers today?**

John's Gospel provides a rich understanding of what it means to be part of God's people. It emphasizes the centrality of Christ, the importance of a personal and abiding relationship with him, the necessity of worshiping God in spirit and truth, the call to humble service and love for one another, the dependence on Christ for spiritual life and fruitfulness, the assurance of God's saving work through the Trinity, the privilege of being objects of Christ's intercession, and the responsibility to participate in the mission of proclaiming the gospel to the world. It also highlights the desired unity among believers, reflecting the unity within the Godhead.