

Dr. Robert Peterson, Johannine Theology, Session 17, Salvation: Election Resources from NotebookLM

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

1. Abstract of Peterson, Johannine Theology, Session 17, Salvation: Election, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This audio transcript captures **Dr. Robert A. Peterson** teaching **Session 17 on Salvation and Election** within his series on **Johannine Theology**. Peterson examines the **Gospel of John**, identifying key themes such as the structure of the Gospel, the "I am" sayings, and responses to Jesus. The lecture specifically explores John's presentation of **election**, noting the absence of Pauline terminology but highlighting the doctrine through three recurring motifs: the Father giving people to the Son, Jesus as the author of election, and the prior identity of God's people. Peterson concludes by situating these Johannine perspectives within broader theological concepts like foreordination, predestination, and the interplay of divine sovereignty and human responsibility.

**2. 20 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of
Dr. Peterson, Johannine Theology, Session 17 – 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_JnTheolo
gy_Session17.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Peterson, Johannine Theology, Session 17, Salvation: Election

Briefing Document: Johannine Theology - Salvation and Election in the Gospel of John

Overview: This briefing document summarizes Dr. Robert A. Peterson's lecture on salvation and election as presented in his series on Johannine Theology, specifically Session 17. Peterson emphasizes that while the Gospel of John might not use the explicit language of Paul regarding predestination and election, the doctrine is undeniably present, communicated through distinct Johannine themes and metaphors. He explores these themes, highlighting the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of humanity, acknowledging the paradoxical nature of their interplay.

Main Themes and Important Ideas:

1. Johannine Context and Purpose:

- The Gospel of John has primary purposes of evangelism and a secondary purpose of edification, with a possible apologetic aim.
- Its structure includes a prologue, the Book of Signs, the Book of Glory, and an epilogue.
- Key Johannine elements include the "I am" sayings of Jesus (summarized in John 14:6 as "the way, the truth, and the life"), the "time" sayings, and the diverse responses to Jesus (negative in 1:10-11, positive in 1:12-13).
- The central purpose statement in John 20:30-31 highlights that the signs are written so that people might believe Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and have eternal life through that belief.

2. The Doctrine of Election in John:

- While John doesn't use the words "predestined" or "election" extensively like Paul, the *concept* of election is present. Peterson warns against the "word concept fallacy," which incorrectly assumes a concept can only exist with specific terminology.
- "Not only do the catchwords sometimes not even communicate the concept, but they're usually not totally unifocal—one catchword, one meaning. But the same concept can be communicated in different ways." (p. 3)

- John communicates the doctrine of election through three primary "pictures, images, and metaphors":
- **The Father Giving People to the Son:** This is a prominent theme, appearing in multiple places, particularly in Jesus' high priestly prayer in John 17.
 - "All this the Father gives me will come to me." (John 6:37, p. 4) - This implies that those given by the Father will inevitably believe.
 - "Since you've given him authority over all flesh... to give eternal life to all whom you have given him." (John 17:2, p. 6) - This verse explicitly links the Father's giving with the Son's giving of eternal life.
 - "Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word." (John 17:6, p. 6)
 - "I am not praying for the world but for those whom you've given me, for they are yours." (John 17:9, p. 7)
 - "Father, I desire that they also whom you have given me may be with me where I am to see the glory that you've given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world." (John 17:24, p. 7)
 - This theme highlights God's sovereign initiative in salvation. Peterson notes that there's no hint that the Father chooses based on foreseen faith; rather, belief follows God's giving.
- **The Son Choosing People:** Uniquely in John 15:16 and 19, Jesus himself is presented as the author of election.
 - "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide." (John 15:16, p. 8) - This underscores Jesus' sovereign selection behind the disciples' fruitfulness.
 - "But because I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you." (John 15:19, p. 8) - This suggests a divine initiative in separating believers from the world.
- **The Prior or Antecedent Identity of God's People:** This motif suggests that there's a distinction between those who are God's people (the elect) and those who are not, even before their explicit belief. This is illustrated by the metaphor of the sheep.

- "But you do not believe because you are not among my sheep." (John 10:26, p. 5) - This statement implies that their lack of belief is rooted in their not being part of God's chosen flock.
- "My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me." (John 10:27, p. 5) - This highlights a pre-existing relationship and identification between Jesus and his elect.
- "Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason you do not hear them is that you are not of God." (John 8:47, p. 14-15) - This links one's origin ("of God") to their ability to receive God's word.

3. Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility:

- Peterson emphasizes the tension and paradox between absolute divine sovereignty in election and genuine human responsibility to believe.
- He acknowledges that this is "beyond our ability to perfectly understand." (p. 5)
- He uses the example of Joseph and his brothers (Genesis 45 & 50) and the crucifixion of Christ (Acts 2 & 4) to illustrate "dual causation," where both human agency and God's sovereign plan are at work in the same event.
- "According to Acts 2 and 4, Jesus was crucified by the hands of wicked men, but they did what God had predestined for them to do. Human sin, divine sovereignty, and providence overrule evil and bring out the greatest act of evil, the greatest good." (p. 9)
- While God is absolutely sovereign, Peterson cautions against fatalism, noting that the God of Scripture is a personal God who can be trusted and who makes covenants.
- Human responsibility is real, even without "absolute power to the contrary."

4. Double Predestination (Election and Reprobation):

- Peterson introduces the concept of "double predestination," using a diagram to illustrate God's foreordination as the overarching control, within which lies providence and predestination.
- Predestination has two aspects:
- **Election (Positive Predestination):** God choosing a people for himself.

- **Reprobation (Negative Predestination):** God passing over others, decreeing to allow them to reap the consequences of their sins.
- "Concerning the non-elect, he merely decrees, he determines, he plans to allow them to reap what their sins deserve. They are vessels of wrath, prepared in advance for destruction." (p. 10-11)
- "Concerning vessels of mercy, Paul writes that the saints are vessels of mercy whom he prepared in advance for glory. That is, God is more proactive in the choice of his people." (p. 11)
- He acknowledges that John's Gospel, particularly in passages like John 10:26 and 12:37-40 (where it says "they could not believe"), supports this idea of a prior distinction and God's sovereign action in hardening hearts.
- "Therefore, they could not believe. For again, Isaiah said, he's blinded their eyes, hardened their hearts, lest they see with their eyes, understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them." (John 12:39-40 quoted, p. 15)

5. The Relationship Between Election and Belief:

- Peterson clarifies the relationship between God's election and human faith.
- While it is true that people are saved because they believe in Jesus, this is not the ultimate reason from a theological perspective.
- Ultimately, people believe because God has chosen them for salvation. Election precedes and undergirds faith.
- "As many as were appointed to eternal life believed." (Acts 13:48 quoted, p. 12)
- This does not nullify the necessity of belief for salvation.

6. Reasons for Being Lost:

- People are lost because they die in their sins, specifically unbelief (John 8:21, 24).
- This is a valid reason ("actual sin"), but not the ultimate reason.
- The doctrine of original sin (Adam's fall and its consequences - Romans 5) also contributes to humanity's lost state.
- Ultimately, some stumble and are lost because they were "ordained" to this (reprobation - 1 Peter 2).

Conclusion:

Dr. Peterson concludes that the doctrine of election, while not explicitly worded in Pauline terms, is a significant aspect of Johannine theology. It is communicated through the Father's giving of people to the Son, the Son's own choosing, and the antecedent identity of God's people. This doctrine operates within the paradoxical framework of divine sovereignty and human responsibility. While acknowledging the challenging nature of double predestination, Peterson argues that the Scriptures, including the Gospel of John, support this understanding of God's sovereign work in salvation. The subsequent lecture will focus on salvation as eternal life.

4. Study Guide: Peterson, Johannine Theology, Session 17, Salvation: Election

Johannine Theology: Salvation and Election Study Guide

Quiz:

1. According to Peterson, what are the primary and secondary purposes of the Gospel of John?
2. Describe the "word concept fallacy" and provide one example of how it relates to the study of Johannine theology.
3. What are the three pictures or metaphors that John uses to communicate the doctrine of election?
4. Explain the significance of John 6:37-39 in relation to the concept of the Father giving people to the Son.
5. How does Peterson address the potential tension between divine sovereignty and human responsibility in John's Gospel?
6. In what unique way does John 15 present Jesus in relation to the doctrine of election?
7. What does Peterson mean by the "antecedent identity" of God's people in John's writings?
8. How does the prayer in John 17 illustrate the theme of the Father giving people to the Son?
9. Explain the concept of "double predestination" as presented by Peterson and its two components.
10. According to Peterson, what is John's primary way of talking about sin, although not the focus in discussions of election?

Quiz Answer Key:

1. The primary purpose of the Gospel of John is evangelism, aiming to persuade people to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and have eternal life. The secondary purpose, corresponding to the farewell discourses and final prayer, is edification, strengthening the faith of believers.

2. The "word concept fallacy" has two misuses: first, insisting that every usage of a particular word always has the same meaning; second, believing that a concept can only be present if specific catchwords are used. An example in Johannine theology is the doctrine of the church, which is present despite John never using the Greek word "ekklesia."
3. The three pictures John uses to communicate the doctrine of election are: the Father giving people to the Son, the Son choosing people (as seen uniquely in John 15), and the antecedent or prior identity of those who are God's people and those who are not.
4. John 6:37-39 states that all the Father gives to Jesus will come to him, and Jesus will not cast them out but will preserve them and raise them up on the last day. This highlights the Father's sovereign initiative in election and Jesus' role in securing the salvation of those given to him.
5. Peterson acknowledges the paradox between absolute divine sovereignty and genuine human responsibility, noting that John's Gospel presents both. While God is ultimately in control, individuals are still held accountable for their belief or unbelief. He suggests that this can be understood as a "dynamic interplay" or "dual causation" in some instances.
6. Uniquely in John 15, Jesus himself is presented as the author of election when he tells his disciples, "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit." This emphasizes Jesus' sovereign initiative in selecting his followers for a specific purpose.
7. The "antecedent identity" refers to the idea that some individuals are God's people (e.g., sheep, children of God) even before they explicitly believe. Their belief and subsequent actions are seen as flowing from this prior relationship established by God's sovereign choice.
8. The prayer in John 17 is heavily governed by the theme of the Father giving people to the Son. Jesus repeatedly refers to "those whom you have given me out of the world" and states that the Father gave him authority over all flesh "to give eternal life to all whom you have given him."
9. "Double predestination" encompasses God's foreordination of all things, including both election (God choosing a people for himself) and reprobation (God passing over others, allowing them to face the consequences of their sin). Election is seen as God being proactive in preparing vessels of mercy for glory,

while reprobation involves God decreeing to allow vessels of wrath to face destruction.

10. According to Peterson, John's primary way of talking about sin is unbelief, or not believing in Jesus. While this is a valid reason for condemnation, in the context of election, John also presents the idea that some do not believe because they are not among Jesus' sheep (i.e., they were not chosen).

Essay Format Questions:

1. Discuss the significance of the "I am" sayings in the Gospel of John and how they contribute to the understanding of Jesus' identity and saving work, as presented by Peterson.
2. Analyze the three pictures or metaphors John uses to communicate the doctrine of election. How do these different images contribute to a comprehensive understanding of God's sovereignty in salvation within the Fourth Gospel?
3. Explore the relationship between divine sovereignty and human responsibility as it is presented in the Gospel of John, according to Peterson. How does John maintain both truths without diminishing either?
4. Examine the role of the Father giving people to the Son as a central motif in John's understanding of salvation and election. How is this theme developed throughout the Gospel, particularly in key passages like John 6 and 17?
5. Evaluate Peterson's argument that John has a doctrine of election despite not using the explicit language found in Paul's letters. What evidence does Peterson present, and how convincing is his case?

Glossary of Key Terms:

- **Word Concept Fallacy:** The error of assuming that the meaning of a word is always consistent across all contexts or that a concept cannot exist without a specific corresponding word.
- **Biblical Theology:** A discipline that studies the theological themes and concepts as they unfold throughout the narrative of the Bible, paying attention to the distinct perspectives of different authors and sections.
- **Election:** God's sovereign choice before the creation of the world to save a specific group of people for himself.
- **Foreordination:** God's eternal plan and decree by which he has determined whatsoever comes to pass. This is a broader concept encompassing both predestination and providence.
- **Predestination:** The aspect of God's foreordination that specifically concerns the eternal destiny of individuals, including both election to salvation and reprobation.
- **Reprobation:** The aspect of God's predestination where he passes over some individuals, not choosing them for salvation, and ultimately ordains them to judgment for their sins.
- **Antecedent Identity:** The idea that some individuals possess a certain status or identity (e.g., being God's sheep or children) prior to their conscious belief or conversion, based on God's sovereign choice.
- **Double Predestination:** The theological view that God actively predestines both the elect to salvation and the reprobate to damnation. Peterson presents this as encompassing both positive election and negative reprobation.
- **Providence:** God's active and ongoing involvement in the world, whereby he preserves, governs, and directs all creatures and events according to his wise and holy purposes.
- **Sola Scriptura:** The Protestant principle that the Bible alone is the ultimate authority for faith and practice.

5. FAQs on Peterson, Johannine Theology, Session 17, Salvation: Election, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions on Johannine Theology: Salvation and Election

1. What are the primary purposes of the Gospel of John as outlined in the lecture?

The primary purpose of the Gospel of John is evangelism, aiming to lead people to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, so that by believing they might have eternal life in his name (John 20:30-31). A secondary purpose, particularly evident in the farewell discourses and Jesus' final prayer in chapter 17, is the edification of believers, strengthening their faith. Additionally, there might be an apologetic purpose in addressing and refuting certain opposing viewpoints.

2. How does the Gospel of John present the concept of election, even though it doesn't use the specific words "predestined" or "election" frequently like Paul?

John communicates the doctrine of election through three main pictures or motifs. First, the prominent theme of the Father giving people to the Son is emphasized repeatedly, especially in John 6 and the high priestly prayer in John 17. Second, uniquely in Scripture within John 15:16 and 19, Jesus himself is presented as the author of election, choosing his disciples. Third, John suggests a prior or antecedent identity of those who are God's people (the elect) and those who are not, implying God's choice was made before belief, as seen in passages like John 10:26 ("You do not believe because you are not among my sheep").

3. What is the significance of the Father giving people to the Son in Johannine theology regarding salvation and election?

The motif of the Father giving people to the Son underscores the idea that God initiates salvation. It suggests that certain individuals are chosen by the Father and entrusted to the Son, who will ensure they come to him and are preserved. This theme is central to Jesus' high priestly prayer in John 17, where he speaks of manifesting God's name to those the Father gave him out of the world and asks that they be with him to see his glory. It highlights God's sovereign grace as the foundation of who receives eternal life.

4. In what way is Jesus presented as the author of election in the Gospel of John, specifically in John 15?

In John 15:16, Jesus tells his disciples, "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit." This verse uniquely positions Jesus as the one who takes the initiative in selecting his followers for a specific purpose – to bear fruit that will last. This highlights Jesus' sovereign role in election, indicating that his choice precedes and enables their following and service.

5. How does John's Gospel address the relationship between divine sovereignty in election and human responsibility in believing?

John's Gospel presents a paradox between absolute divine sovereignty in election and genuine human responsibility. While it emphasizes God's initiative in choosing individuals for salvation, it also consistently holds people accountable for their unbelief (John 3:18, John 8:24). For instance, Jesus tells the Jews they do not believe because they are not his sheep (John 10:26), yet elsewhere, their unbelief is presented as culpable (John 5:40). This tension illustrates that both divine sovereignty and human responsibility are realities, even if their precise interplay is beyond full human comprehension.

6. What is meant by the "antecedent identity" of God's people in John's Gospel in relation to election?

The concept of antecedent identity suggests that there are those who are considered God's people (like sheep or children of God) even before they explicitly believe. This is implied in passages like John 10:26, where not being among Jesus' sheep is given as the reason for their unbelief, and John 8:47, which states, "Whoever is of God hears the words of God; the reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God." This perspective indicates that God's choice precedes and influences one's disposition towards belief.

7. How does the lecture explain the concept of "double predestination" in light of John's theology?

Double predestination, as explained in the lecture, encompasses both positive election (God choosing a people for himself) and a negative aspect, sometimes termed reprobation (God passing over others in his choosing). While John's Gospel primarily focuses on the positive aspect of the Father giving people to the Son and Jesus choosing his disciples, passages like John 10:26 and John 12:37-40, which describe the inability of some to believe as being in accordance with God's plan, hint at this broader concept. The lecture clarifies that God's proactivity is emphasized in the case of the elect, while concerning the non-elect, God decrees to allow them to reap the consequences of their sins.

8. How does understanding election in John's Gospel relate to the perseverance of the saints or eternal security?

The theme of the Father giving people to the Son in John's Gospel is connected to the idea of preservation. Jesus states in John 6:39 that it is the Father's will that he should lose nothing of all that the Father has given him but raise it up on the last day. Similarly, in John 10:28, Jesus says, "I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand." These passages suggest that those whom the Father has chosen and given to the Son are secure in their salvation and will be preserved by Jesus.