

Dr. Robert A. Peterson, Johannine Theology,

Session 15, God's People

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This is Dr. Robert A. Peterson in his teaching on Johannine theology. This is session 15, God's People.

We continue our studies in the Johannine theology, the theology of the gospel of John, and let's seek the Lord.

Father, thank you for your word. Thank you for giving us grace in Christ Jesus before eternal ages. Thank you for sending your son to be our savior and for your spirit into our hearts. Bless us, encourage us, correct us where that's what we need. Lead us in your way, we pray in Jesus' name, amen.

We have studied John's style, the structure of the fourth gospel, its purposes, the I am sayings, the signs, the time sayings, responses to Jesus, witnesses to Jesus, pictures of Jesus, and then pictures of his saving work, the Holy Spirit, we're up to God's people.

That is the New Testament doctrine of God's people in John's gospel, or, really, John's doctrine of the church. The church in John, this time, I'm reading from a paper that I wrote, which will be part of a volume on the doctrine of the church. It includes the Old Testament background and then the doctrine of the church in the synoptic gospels in John. Actually, we separated Luke because Luke goes with Acts, Paul, and so forth.

The church in John. Although Rudolf Bultmann boldly claimed and quoted that no specific ecclesiastical interest can be detected in the fourth gospel, this is erroneous. As Robert Kysar said, Kysar wrote a book, *The Fourth Evangelist and His Gospel*, which is renowned for being a superb summary of secondary literature, at least up until 1975 when it was written.

As Kysar said, the ecclesiological themes of the fourth gospel are prominent and important in the total picture of the evangelist's thought, which is a close quote. In fact, the gospel of John shows a great interest in the New Testament people of God. It lacks the word church, ecclesia, but refers to that reality many times, as D.A. Carson insists, quote, 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.

Carson's commentary on John, the gospel according to John, which I mentioned previously, is my favorite commentary on John for the theology of John. What is the glue that holds together John's pictures of and teaching on the church? The answer is the same for what holds together everything else in the gospel: his overwhelming interest in the person and work of Christ. We will treat John's ecclesiology by viewing seven pictures of the church.

Overview. The church is those worshiping the Father in spirit and truth. The people of God in John are those saved by the Father and the Son.

They are the sheep of the good shepherd. They are those following Jesus' example in John 13. They are branches abiding in the vine, John 15.

They are those objects, those who are objects of Jesus' high priestly prayer, John 17. And finally, those commissioned with the gospel, John chapter 20. Those worshiping the Father in spirit and truth, John 4:21 to 26, 39 to 42.

The New Testament people of God are those who, by God's grace, worship the Father in spirit and truth. We learn this from John's dealings with the Samaritan woman and her people. Jesus corrected her ideas concerning worship.

Her people worship on Mount Gerizim in ignorance because, quote, salvation is from the Jews, John 4:22. A time is approaching when worship will be independent of geographical locale, even Jerusalem. In that day, quote, the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth, verse 24.

Because God is spirit, his worshipers will worship him spiritually and according to his scriptural revelation. After Jesus showed supernatural knowledge of her sinful lifestyle, she concluded that he was a prophet, verses 16 to 18. Jesus then revealed to this woman that he was the Messiah.

She returned to her town of Sychar and told others of her meeting with Jesus. They invited him to stay with them. Many Samaritans believe that Jesus was the savior of the world because of her testimony and, more importantly, Jesus' words, verse 42.

This passage instructs us concerning the church. God deals with people as individuals, the Samaritan woman, and in groups, the Samaritans. Stephen Smalley sees this principle, characteristic of John's thought applied here to the people of God.

Quote: the theology of the church in John is nicely balanced between the one and the many, close quote. Smalley's book, *John Evangelist and Interpreter*. This passage also points in the direction of the New Testament's expanded vision of the identity of God's people.

With few exceptions, Israel failed in its responsibility to be a light to the nations. The Samaritans were the offspring of poor Jews left behind in the Assyrian deportation of the southern kingdom of the northern kingdom. And people, quote, the king of Assyria brought people from Babylon, Cuthah, Avva, Hamath, and Sepharvaim and settled in the place of the Israelites in the cities of Samaria--2 King 17:24. Consequently, Jews regarded the Samaritans as half-breeds and despised them. John 4:9. John 8:48.

Jesus swims against the tide. And in Luke's gospel, Jesus presents Samaritans as the hero of the parable of the good Samaritan, Luke 10, 33 to 37. And the only grateful one of the ten lepers healed, Luke 17, 16.

Barrett cites as evidence of a universal mission in John's gospel, laying great stress on Jesus' work among the Samaritans. Chapter four concludes his account with the Samaritans' pronouncement that Jesus is the savior of the world. Close quote.

It's from Barrett's *The Gospel According to St. John*, which is a very good exegetical commentary. Although in his introduction, Barrett says he's not sure how much of it really happened. But his interpretation is good.

Jesus is indeed the only savior for humankind who saves Jews, Samaritans, and anyone else who believes. As a result, as true worshippers, they quote and worship the Father in spirit and truth. Verse 24.

The people of God in the fourth gospel are those saved by the Father and the Son. John 6:35 to 40. Jesus' bread of life discourse identifies the New Testament people of God with the Trinity who saves them.

Actually, with the Father and the Son who saves them. There's at least one mention of the spirit. But, primarily, in the farewell discourses, John's doctrine of the spirit speaks of the spirit post-Pentecost.

After Jesus multiplied the loaves and the fish to feed a large crowd, he accused those who followed him across the Sea of Galilee of sign-seeking and materialism. John 6:26-27. The crowd requested a sign pointing to God's provision of manna in the wilderness.

John 6:30 and 31. Jesus replied, Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.

Verses 32-33. As often happens, Jesus' hearers misunderstand him and request wonder bread from Jesus—verse 34.

Jesus said I'm the bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. 35.

After blaming his hearers for their unbelief, Jesus taught that the Father and he perform the work of salvation for the New Testament people of God—verse 36, beginning at 36. Everyone the Father gives me will come to me, and the one who comes to me I will never cast out.

For I have come down from heaven not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me. This is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose none of those he has given me but should raise them up on the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him will have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.

John 6:37-40. John uses terminology different from Paul's in Romans 8, 29, and 30, but their teaching is similar. Paul wrote that for those whom he foreknew, he was also predestined to conform to the image of his Son so that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

And those whom he predestined, he also called. And those whom he called, he also justified. And those whom he justified, he also glorified.

Here is a comparison between the two. Paul has foreknowledge, Romans 8:29. Predestination, same verse.

Calling is in verse 30. Faith is omitted. Justification is in verse 30.

Preservation and resurrection are omitted. Glorification, the same verse 30. John doesn't have foreknowledge but has something akin to predestination.

The Father gives people to the Son, John 6:37. The Father draws them, parallel to Paul's calling, 37. People come to Jesus.

It's John-speak for believing in Jesus, 37 and 40. People gain eternal life, verse 40. The Son will not cast out or lose them, verses 37 and 39.

The Son will raise them on the last day, 39 and 40. John does not have glorification here, but something very much like it in John 17:22 and 24. John has nothing corresponding to Paul's foreknowledge, foreknowing God's people.

The Father's giving people to the Son is one of John's three themes of election. This corresponds to Paul's predestination. The Father's drawing people to the Son corresponds to Paul's calling.

People coming to believe in Jesus corresponds to Paul's teaching and frequent teaching on faith. Compare Romans 1:16, 17. Romans 3:25 to 30.

People gaining eternal life in John corresponds to one result of justification in Paul. The Son's keeping and not losing God's people corresponds to Paul's teaching in many places. Compare Romans 8:28 to 39, and specifically here, Romans 8:29 through 31, that those foreknown are glorified already, in verses 29 and 30.

Jesus raising people up on the last day fits with Paul's teaching on the returning Jesus, powerfully transforming believers' bodies to be like his glorious body, Philippians 3:20 and 21. Pulling things together, we see that John describes the New Testament people of God as those saved by the Father and the Son. Those the Father chooses for salvation, he also draws to Jesus.

They believe in Jesus, and Jesus gives them eternal life. Jesus will keep them saved until the last day, when he will raise them from the dead. John thus teaches two important things about the people of God.

First, God saves them from the beginning, the Father chooses them, and until the end, Jesus raises them to eternal life. Second, note that it is the same people whom the Father chooses and who will be raised by Jesus. There is, thus, a continuity to the people of God because of the saving work of the Father and the Son.

And just to be clear, as a systematic theologian, I want to end the work of the Holy Spirit, although John doesn't say it here. As is characteristic, he relegates that kind of teaching to the farewell discourses of John 13 and the following. As is often the case, John does not mention the Holy Spirit here, but if we correlate other texts in John with 6:37 to 40, we add that the Spirit regenerates God's people, 3:8, 6:63, and will be in and with believers forever, John 14:16, and 17.

So, the Church is the people saved by the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The New Testament people of God are defined by their relationship to the Trinity—sheep of the Good Shepherd, John 10:1 to 16.

The New Testament people of God are the sheep of Jesus, the Good Shepherd. John's use of the Old Testament differs from that of the synoptics. They commonly speak of Old Testament fulfillments in Jesus' life and ministry.

For example, in this quote, all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet. See, the virgin will become pregnant and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Emmanuel, which is translated as God is with us. Matthew 1:22, 23, quoting Isaiah 7:14.

John, by contrast, presents allusions to the Old Testament, including antitypes in his story of Jesus. The distinction is not absolute but is one of emphasis, for both John and the Synoptics contain fulfilled prophecies and allusions. The Old Testament speaks of the people of God as the sheep and God as their shepherd.

This is true of Ezekiel 34, which supplies the background for John 10. The Lord speaks woe to the shepherds of Israel who have been feeding themselves. You do not tend the flock.

My flock was scattered over the whole face of the earth. Look, I am against the shepherds. As a shepherd looks for his sheep on the day he is among his scattered flock, so I will look for my flock.

I will rescue them from all the places where they have been scattered. I will establish over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he will shepherd them. I, the Lord, will be their God, and my servant David will be a prince among them.

Then they will know that I, the Lord, their God, am with them and that they, the house of Israel, are my people. Ezekiel 34, many verses. Compare Jeremiah 23, 1 through 4. Jesus likewise denounced false shepherds.

Quote: all who came before me are thieves and robbers. In so doing, he did not condemn Old Testament prophets but the false shepherds of Israel, both ancient and contemporary, such as those who mistreated the blind man in John 9, the previous chapter. Jesus is the good shepherd who not only cares for his sheep but lays down his life for them.

Jesus is also the gate for the sheep to enter the sheepfold of the New Testament people of God. John 10, 7. I am the gate. If anyone enters by me, he'll be saved and will come in and go out and find pasture.

Colin Cruz offers background to Jesus' words. Quote: as the sheep entering the stone enclosure of which the shepherd himself was the door were safe, so too, people who believe in Jesus are eternally secure. As the shepherd led his sheep out to pasture during the day and brought them in at night, so too did Jesus provide for those who believe in him.

Colin Cruz, John, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. Replacement volume. Indeed, Jesus, as a good shepherd, came to give eternal life in abundance to believers, verse 10.

Jesus identified the New Testament people of God as his sheep for whom he lays down his life, verses 11 and 15. Faithful shepherds sometimes risk their lives to keep their sheep safe from, say, a lion or a bear, compare 1 Samuel 17:35. Shepherds,

however, did not want to lay down their lives for their sheep because then there would be no one to protect them.

But Jesus is the good shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep. Jesus laid down his life for his sheep. He died to save sinners, as John the Baptist said, quote, look the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, John 1:29 and 36.

Moses' action in the wilderness is a type of Christ crucified, quote, just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life, John 3:14 and 15. Jesus, the good shepherd who lays down his life, takes it up again. He raises himself from the dead, John 10:17 and 18.

This is one of two places where scripture says Jesus raises himself from the dead. The other is John 2:19 through 22. The crucified one is alive to give life to believers.

Speaking of his approaching death and subsequent resurrection, he said, in a little while, the world will no longer see me, but you will see me because I live, you will live too, John 14:19. One of Jesus' most frequent Christological themes is Jesus as a life-giver, the one who bestows eternal life. He who gave life to everything as the Father's agent in creation, 1, 3, gives eternal life to believers as a gift throughout the gospel of John 5:21, 10:28, 11:25, 14:6. Although John's terminology differs from Paul's, John 2 teaches that God defines his New Testament people by linking their salvation to his son's death and resurrection.

Jesus died and arose to give eternal life to his sheep. As a result, the shepherd and the sheep know each other in covenant, quote, 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 and 15. George Beasley Murray captures John's thought, quoting that the mutual knowledge of the shepherd and his sheep denotes an intimate relationship that reflects the fellowship of love between the Father and the Son.

George Beasley Murray, John in the word biblical commentary. John 10 also points toward the universality and unity of the New Testament people of God. Jesus said, 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, verse 16. The other sheep are the Gentile believers who, in God's grace, will unite with Jewish believers to form the Christian church.

Leon Morris underscores this point. The other sheep whom Jesus must bring are, quote, those who are not to be found within Judaism. The words look to the worldwide scope of the gospel.

They, too, will hear the shepherd's voice. The end result is one flock and one shepherd. The other sheep are not to remain distinct from the existing sheep, as though there were to be a Jewish church and a separate Gentile church.

They are to be united in one flock, and they all stand under the leadership of one shepherd. The unity is not a natural unity, but one brought about by the activity of the shepherd in bringing them. Leon Morris, the gospel according to John, new international commentary on the New Testament, N-I-C-N-T.

Another picture of the New Testament people of God is those following Jesus' example. John 13:15 through 17. The people of God in the New Testament are those who know and love Jesus and follow his example.

John presents this truth powerfully in John 13 when Jesus washes his disciples' feet. The apostle sets the stage for Jesus' betrayal and death by Judas by ensuring readers that he was in control. Quote: Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world to the Father.

John 13:1. Previously, Jesus had said that his hour had not yet come. 2:4, 7:30, 8:20. Now, the appointed time had come for him to die, rise, and return to the Father.

John adds, quote, having loved his own who are in the world, he loved them to the end, verse 1 of John 13. Jesus' own are the people the Father gave to him. He loved them both to the end of his mission on earth and to the nth degree, as this account shows.

John mentions the betrayer Judas and the evil one who inspired him in verse 2. Once more, John reminds us that things had not gotten out of Jesus' control. Quote: Jesus knew that the Father had given everything into his hands, that he had come from God, and that he was going back to God, verse 3. Jesus then did something that astonished his disciples. He arose, prepared, and began to wash their feet, verses 4 and 5. This was something that only those lower on the social scale performed for those above them.

Notice that although their feet were dusty, none of the disciples volunteered to wash the feet of his fellows. To do so would be demeaning. Indeed, foot washing was not something a teacher did for his pupils, a father did for his family, or a husband did for a wife.

It was, quote, a task normally reserved for the lowest of menial servants, close quote, D. A. Carson, Commentary on John. Jesus took the place, this place, and it shocked his disciples. Simon Peter was incredulous, and Jesus told him he would understand later verses 6 and 7. After Peter protested, you will never wash my feet, Jesus insisted this act was necessary if someone wanted to belong to him.

Peter then asked Jesus to wash his hands and his head as well. Peter's a stitch, 13:9, quote, one who has bathed, Jesus told him, don't need to wash anything except his feet, but he is completely clean verse 10. Jesus here reveals that this physical washing symbolizes spiritual cleansing.

The disciples did not yet understand that Jesus washed their feet as a humble act, which pointed to his most humble acts, the most humble of acts in going to the cross for them. His atonement brought cleansing from sin, which was pointed to in the foot washing. Jesus declared that the 11 disciples were, quote, clean and forgiven, but excluded Judas, the betrayer, in verses 10 and 11.

After Jesus put back on his outer clothing, he communicated a second meaning for foot washing. The first meaning is that we need daily cleansing of sin. Do you know what I have done for you? I'm quoting 12 through 17 of John 13.

You call me teacher and Lord, and you are speaking rightly since that is what I am. So, if I, your teacher and Lord, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example that you also should do just as I have done for you.

Truly, I tell you, a servant is not greater than his master, and a messenger is not greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them. John 13:12 through 17.

Here, Jesus defines the people of God as those who address him as teacher and Lord and who follow his example of humble service. He's not instituting foot washing as a church ordinance like baptism in the Lord's Supper. Instead, he taught them by example that they are not to exalt themselves above one another or the people to whom they will minister.

Instead, they are to follow the example of him who said, quote, whoever wants to become great among you will be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you will be a slave to all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. Mark 10:43 to 45.

The last verse includes the famous ransom saying. Jesus in Mark is more direct than in John 13:1 to 17. In Mark, Jesus uses his cross as the greatest example of humble service to others, whereas John only hints at it with the language of showing his love for them to the uttermost.

That precedes the foot washing. Jesus is first of all the savior of all who put their faith in him for salvation. Salvation does not come by following his example.

Rather, those who have trusted him as Lord and Savior find that he is also their example. Morris hits a nail on the head concerning this truth. The disciples, quote, are not to stand on their dignity or think too highly of themselves.

If their master and sender do lowly actions, then they, the slaves and the sent ones, should not consider menial tasks beneath their dignity. Close quote. Morris's commentary on the Gospel of John.

Believers are abiding in the vine, John 15:1 through 6. The people of God, according to the New Testament, are branches that abide in Jesus, the true vine. As usual, John sets Jesus' extended discourse against an Old Testament backdrop. Here, he includes one text from the Psalms and at least six from the prophets.

Psalm 80, Isaiah 5, Jeremiah 2, Ezekiel 17:19, Hosea 1. The most relevant of these is Isaiah 5:1 through 8, and I quote, I will sing about the one I love, a song about my loved one's vineyard. The one I love had a vineyard on a very fertile hill. He broke up the soil, cleared it of stones, and planted it with the finest vines.

He built a tower in the middle of it and even dug out a winepress there. He expected it to yield good grapes, but it yielded worthless grapes. So now, residents of Jerusalem and men of Judah, please judge between me and my vineyard.

What more could I have done for my vineyard than I did? Why, when I expected a yield of good grapes, did it yield worthless grapes? Now, I will tell you what I'm about to do to my vineyard. I will remove its hedge, and it will be consumed. I will tear down its wall, and it will be trampled.

I will make it a wasteland. It will not be pruned or weeded. Thorns and briars will grow up.

I will also give orders to the clouds that rain should not fall on it. For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah the plant he delighted in. He expected justice but saw injustice.

He expected righteousness but heard crowds and cries of despair. He expected righteousness but heard cries of despair. Israel, God's Old Testament people, was the Lord's vineyard that yielded, quote, worthless grapes.

Verses two and four of Isaiah five. Jesus is a true vine, and all branches in him are the New Testament people of God, who receive life from him and consequently bear good and lasting fruit. Three times in John, Jesus claims to be the true fulfillment of an Old Testament reality.

He's the true light, 1:9. The true bread from heaven, 6:32. And the true vine, 15:1.

Although John sometimes uses true in contrast to something that is false, in these three occurrences, he means that Jesus is the real light, real bread, or real vine. That is, he is the reality to which the Old Testament types pointed. Israel was supposed to be a light to the nations, but it largely failed in that task.

Jesus is the true light of the world, 1:9. Jesus gave the Israelites manna in the wilderness, but those who ate eventually died. Jesus is the true bread, and all who eat, that is, believe in him, will live forever John 6:51.

Israel was Yahweh's vineyard, but it did not produce the good grapes that he desired. Jesus, the true vine, produces much fruit in and through those who abide in him. Cruz summarizes ancient Palestinian viticulture, the cultivation of grapes, that informs this passage.

He notes two processes: the training of the vines and the pruning of the branches. Quote: vines were trained in one of two ways. One, they were allowed to trail along the ground, and then the fruit-bearing branches were lifted up by placing rocks or poles under them to allow aeration.

Or two, they were trained from the outset onto poles or trellises, the branches being lifted onto these to improve their fruit-bearing. The first pruning occurred in spring, involving four operations. One is the removal of the growing tips of vigorous shoots.

Two, cutting off from the end of growing shoots to prevent entire shoots from being snapped off by the wind. Third, the removal of some flowers or grape clusters so that those left could produce more and better quality fruit. And four, the removal of suckers that rose below the ground.

Spring pruning did not involve the removal of wooded branches or their subsequent burning. The second pruning occurred in autumn after the grapes were harvested and the vines were dormant. This involved the removal of unwanted branches and cutting back the desired branches.

After the autumn pruning, the cuttings, including many wooden ones, were gathered up and burned." Close quote. Cruz, Commentary on John, page 315. Jesus said, I am the true vine and added, and my father is the gardener, verse 1. Jesus thus acknowledges the Father's leadership and affirms that they work in tandem.

Consequently, in scripture, a result of no fruit indicates no eternal life. So, it is here. Quote: every branch in me that does not produce fruit, he removes.

Close quote. The father cuts off fruitless branches. These are those who profess to know Jesus, but whose fruitlessness reveals their true condition.

The father, quote, prunes every branch that produces fruit so that it will produce more fruit, verse 2. This is the spring pruning to promote fruitfulness referred to above. By a play on words, Jesus identified the disciples with fruit-bearing branches when he said, you are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. He prunes if you are already clean if it's a wordplay.

The cleansing by God indicates that pruning indicates cleansing. Jesus commands professed believers represented by his disciples, abide in me and I and you. John 15, 3. Just as branches cannot bear fruit apart from the vine, so humans cannot bear fruit for God apart from Jesus.

The true vine who gives eternal life as a gift verses 4 and 5. Moreover, if anyone does not remain in me, he's thrown aside like a branch, and he withers. Then they gather them, throw them into the fire, and they are burned, verse 6. Keeping in mind the quoted viticultural background here, this refers to the autumn pruning when branches that are no longer fruit-bearing are severed, cast into the fire, and burned. Cruz is correct quote; the implication is that those who do not obey Jesus will experience judgment.

John 3:18, 8:21, 24, 12:25, 48, 17:12. The primary reference was probably to Judas Iscariot. The use of the passive voice indicates that God is the one who implements the judgment, which is a close quote.

The true people of God abide in Jesus' divine and, as a result, obey him, thereby showing they are his people. Jesus expands on the idea of abiding or remaining in him. Those who abide in him and keep his word will gain answers to prayer.

John 15, verses 7, compare verse 16. God the Father gets the glory when believers demonstrate the reality of their faith in Jesus by producing much fruit. In verse 8, amazingly, the measure of Jesus' love for his own is the Father's love for him, verse 9. The concept of abiding is mentioned many times in John 15:1 to 16 and here is the closest the text comes to defining it, quote, as the Father has loved me, so have I loved you.

Abide in my love, verse 9. Abiding or remaining in Christ means abiding in his love. Beazley Murray writes, quote, to remain in Jesus is also to remain in his love, just as Jesus throughout his life remained in the Father's love, close quote. Abiding in Jesus' love involves obeying him as he obeyed the Father, verse 10.

Abiding in Christ produces joy, verse 11, and love for other believers, quote, love one another as I have loved you, verse 12. The supreme demonstration of Jesus' love for his own is his laying down his life for them, verse 13. Here, Jesus teaches that the obedient New Testament people of God are Jesus' friends, verses 14 and 15.

This speaks of a personal relationship to Jesus, a theme of the fourth gospel. Consider this: this is eternal life, that they may know you, Jesus prayed, the only true God, and the one you have sent, Jesus Christ, John 17:3. Jesus returns to the theme of divine election that we saw in 637. You did not choose me, but I chose you.

I appointed you to go and produce fruit, and that your fruit should remain, 15:16. The thrust in John 15 is on the disciples' responsibility of remaining in Christ to bear much fruit. But lest we misunderstand John's message, here, at the end of the abiding passage, John sounds a clear note of divine sovereignty.

Here alone in scripture, Jesus is the author of the election; compare verse 19. Ultimately, he chose the disciples for salvation and fruit-bearing. They must obey him to remain in him and live fruitful Christian lives.

But theirs is not a self-help program, for underneath are the everlasting arms of the Son of God. The focus in John 15, as in the rest of John's gospel, is on Christ. Here he is the true vine, the fulfillment of Old Testament types, who works with and under the Father.

The New Testament people of God are those who receive life from him and consequently bear good and lasting fruit. Jesus speaks often of abiding or remaining in him in this passage. Abiding is covenantal and relational.

To abide in Christ is to have fellowship with him, as one has fellowship with God the Father. Compare 1 John 1:3. The New Testament people of God are those who abide in the Son and produce fruit for the Father and for him, objects of Jesus' high priestly prayer.

John 17:17-23. The New Testament people of God are those for whom Jesus prays in his high priestly prayer. Although commentators vary concerning the details, the traditional outline of this chapter is broad and serviceable.

Jesus prays for himself, verses 1-5, his disciples, verses 6-19, and future believers, verses 20-26. As we saw in 13:1, but now from the mouth of Jesus, his hour had come for him to glorify the Father by dying on the cross, rising from the dead, ascending, and returning to the Father, verse 1. Jesus begins by praying for himself in relation to his Father. In fact, the cross and empty tomb signify the mutual glorification of the Father, the Son, and the Father, verse 1. The Father gave the Son universal authority that he might give the gift of eternal life to those whom the Father chose, those he gave to the Son, verse 2. Jesus then defines eternal life relationally.

It is knowing the Father and the Son, verse 3. Jesus has glorified the Father by completing his mission of dying and rising, verse 4, for Jesus adopts a post-resurrection perspective in this prayer. He asks, now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world existed. Next, Jesus prays for his disciples, both the 11 and those whom they represent, verses 6 to 19.

Barrett clearly brings out the importance of the disciples in John's doctrine of a church. Quote: John constantly and rightly finds the church prefigured in the period of the ministry. Primarily, it is prefigured by the disciples.

A major Christological theme of the fourth gospel is Jesus as the revealer of God. He says to the Father, quote, I revealed your name to the people you gave me from the world. They were yours.

You gave them to me, and they have kept your word. Now they know that everything you have given me is from you, because I've given them the words you gave me. They have received them and have known for certain that I came from you.

They have believed that you sent me. John 17:6 through 8. Jesus made known the Father to the elect. The Father chose them and gave them to the Son.

The Son revealed the Father to them, and they believed in verse 6. Jesus, the revealer, made known to them the message the Father gave him, and they know the Father. As a result, they believe in the incarnation of the Son, verses 6 through 8. The New Testament people of God are those who know the Father and the Son because of the Son's ministry as the revealer of God. Of course, they know the Spirit too, but John doesn't say it right here.

Jesus prays for the people the Father gave him and not for the world, verse 9. The Father and Son share all things, and amazingly, the Son declares that he is glorified in his people, despite their reluctance to believe and their coming desertion at his crucifixion, verse 10. Jesus envisions himself as no longer in the world, and he prays for his followers, whom he will leave behind after he returns to the Father, verse 10. Jesus asked the Father to protect and unify the New Testament people of God.

Jesus protected all except Judas, the betrayer. Jesus did this while he was with them. Now he's going back to the Father, whom he asked to continue to protect them, verses 11 and 12.

The people of God are those for whom the Son prays, even those protected by him and the Father; compare John 10:28, and 29. Earlier, Jesus gave his disciples joy, 15:11, 16, 20, 22, 24. Now he prays that their joy might be multiplied, John 17:13.

Because the disciples do not belong to the world, even as Jesus does it, when he gave them God's word, the world hated them, verses 14 and 16. Again, Jesus prays for God's protection of his people in the world, this time from Satan, verse 15. Jesus concludes his prayer for the disciples by speaking of sanctification, his and theirs.

Sanctify them by the truth. Your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I also have sent them verses 17 and 19.

Of course, I sanctify myself for them, so that they also might be sanctified by the truth, verses 17 and 19. Of course, sanctification is used here in two different senses. Jesus' sanctification is his priestly consecration to the task the Father sent him to accomplish, to make atonement for all who would believe in him.

Jesus' priestly consecration is the basis for his followers' sanctification from sin, for which he prays. Verses 17 and 19. God applies Jesus' work to his people through the word of truth, the gospel, verse 17.

Jesus' fulfillment of his mission in making atonement leads to his disciples' subsequent sanctification and their mission to preach the gospel to others, verse 18. As Jesus initiates the third and final section of his priestly prayer, verses 19 to 26 of John 17, he prays for the apostles and converts. I pray not only for these, but also for those who believe in me through their word, verse 20.

He prays for their unity, which he compares to the ontological unity he has with the Father, verse 21. Jesus prays that even as the Father and Son mutually indwell one another, his disciples will be in union with them, Father and Son, to convince the world that Jesus was sent by God, verse 21. Jesus has already given the glory to the Father.

He's already given the glory the Father gave him to his disciples so they may be unified, verse 22. As the Father indwells Jesus, he will indwell believers to produce great unity in the church. This will result in unsaved people believing that Jesus came from God with the message of God's love for sinners, verse 23.

Jesus concludes his prayer by asking the Father to bring the chosen ones to heaven so they can see Jesus' glory that the Father gave him before creation, verse 24. Although the world is ignorant of the Father, Jesus, who alone knows the Father, has revealed to his disciples that Jesus came from the Father, verse 25. Jesus revealed the Father to believers and will continue to do so that the Father's love may be in their hearts and that Jesus may indwell them, verse 26.

Jesus' prayer teaches us much about his church. All four attributes of the church, based on the Nicene-Constantinopolitan creed, are found here. It is one holy, Catholic, universal, and apostolic church.

First, it is one in answer to Jesus' prayer for the Father to make it one, verses 11, 21 to 23. As a result, it is objective, and individuals and churches must work to make it subjective. Second, the church is holy because Jesus, our great high priest, consecrated himself to his priestly sacrifice on Calvary so that his people would become holy, verses 17 through 19.

Third, it is universal, including not only Jesus' disciples but all who would believe in him through their witness, verses 18 and 20. Fourth, the church is apostolic not because of Roman Catholic succession from Peter but because of believers preaching the apostolic doctrine on which the church was founded, verses 6 through 8, 14 and 20. This passage also contains the mysterious truth of the Trinity's perichoresis, or circumsession, circumincession, mutual indwelling, 21 to 23, and its stupendous corollary that in a creaturely way, as a result of redemption, the New Testament people of God also mutually indwell the Father and the Son, verses 21, 23, 26.

John 17 teaches much about the church, but nothing more amazing than the truth that God has seen fit to reproduce the Trinity's life, love, and unity in the lives of the people of God. The church must ask God for grace that it might experience the startling results of Jesus' high priestly prayer. Lastly, the New Testament people of God are those commissioned with the gospel, John 20:19 to 23.

We saw this previously, so I'll summarize here. In John's gospel, Jesus appears three times to his disciples after rising from the dead. In fact, John counts for us.

Quote: this was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead, 21:14. After Mary Magdalene found the stone rolled away from Jesus' tomb, she ran and told Peter and John, who ran to the tomb and found it empty, chapter 21 to 10. Then Jesus appeared to Mary and made himself known to her.

Jesus instructed her to quote, quote, go to my brothers and tell them that I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God, chapter 20, verse 17. Mary obeyed and announced to the disciples, I have seen the Lord and relayed Jesus' message, verse 18. John's first recorded resurrection appearance of Jesus occurred on Sunday as the disciples gathered behind locked doors in fear of the Jews.

Quote: Jesus came, stood among them, and said to them, peace be with you. When he showed them the marks in his hands and side, they rejoiced. Again, Jesus said, peace be with you, a common greeting filled with meaning as he replaced the disciples' fear and guilt with sight.

Then, Jesus combined a prophetic action with words. As the Father has sent me, I also send you. After saying this, he breathed on them and said, receive the Holy Spirit.

If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them. If you withhold forgiveness, it is withheld. Jesus here recounts God's in-breathing to Adam, giving him the breath of life, animating him so he became alive.

Here, Jesus, in his prophetic action, breathes on the disciples. Jesus, the life-giver, promises them God's assistance in the person of the Holy Spirit that they might be used to bring the life-giving message to the world. The people of God in the Gospel of John are thus those commissioned by Jesus to preach the Gospel in the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit, with the result that they bring forgiveness or the lack of the same on hearers who believe or reject the truth.

John's Gospel of the church is indeed prominent and significant and a blessing for the first hearers as well as for those who have heard it down through the ages.

This is Dr. Robert A. Peterson in his teaching on Johannine theology. This is session 15, God's People.