

# **Dr. Robert A. Peterson, The Holy Spirit and Union with Christ, Session 5, Old Testament Identification**

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This is Dr. Robert Peterson in his teaching on the Holy Spirit and union with Christ. This is session 5, Foundations for Union with Christ, Old Testament Identification.

We continue our study of God the Holy Spirit and his greatest salvific work, which is uniting believers to Christ.

Yesterday, we explored, in previous lectures, we explored the Spirit's personality, deity, and his works in the Old and New Testaments, concluding with his works in the life of Jesus. Now, before turning to actual union with Christ in John's Gospel and then later, Lord willing, in Paul's letters, we need to talk about the way union with Christ looks from the perspective of the Old Testament, the Synoptic Gospels, and Acts. There is no union with Christ in those corpora of the Bible, but there are foundations that are laid.

God lays the foundations for union with Christ that enables us to understand it much better. I might say I want to give credit; I've had wonderful teaching assistants over the years. I have had significant help from Kyle Keating on all three of these foundation sections, and I want to recognize him for that. I also say this material is hard to find anywhere else than in my book, *Salvation Applied by the Spirit, Union with Christ*.

The Old Testament provides the foundation for every New Testament teaching, including union with Christ, because it tells so much of the biblical story. Union with Christ does not emerge from a void but rather fills out concepts introduced in the Old Testament, which foreshadows these concepts, foreshadowing with Christ. The primary concepts we will use are identification, incorporation, and participation.

I'm going to talk about them a little bit now because we're going to use the same three concepts for the Old Testament, for the Synoptic Gospels, and for Acts, and of course, we'll see those same three in actual union with Christ. Identification, incorporation, participation. Identification refers to God identifying with his people through his presence and, in this way, giving them an identity.

The Old Testament people become the people of God because the living and true God claims them as his own and relates to them by covenant, and in this way, his promises and presence identify them, giving them a distinctive identity in the ancient Near East. So, first of all, identification. Incorporation refers to God's creating a people for himself.

From one man and his wife, who were as good as dead as far as having children are concerned, God miraculously brought forth Isaac and Jacob and the tribes of Israel through Jacob. God created a people for himself. This, of course, foreshadows people believing in Christ and entering into a personal relationship with him via union with Christ, but at the same time, they are incorporated into the body of Christ, into the church.

Union with Christ is thus an individual soteriological principle, an individual principle of salvation, and also a communal or corporate soteriological principle. Believing in Jesus, we are joined to every other person who has believed in Jesus. Again, here are the ideas we're concerned about.

Identification, especially through God's presence with his people. He gives them an identity they did not have before, and that changes them forever. Romans 11, the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable.

I understand there's still a future for ethnic Israel, for sons and descendants of Abraham and Sarah. Incorporation. God created a people for himself from Abraham and Sarah, and in the deliverance from Egypt, he made them his people corporately.

So, they belong to him as a people in a way no other people in the ancient Near East did. Identification, incorporation, and participation refers to God's people sharing in God's story and even the life of God by virtue of their own experiences in faithfully following him. Of course, Israel did not always faithfully follow God, and yet he is faithful to them, and they participate in his story as he claims them as his peculiar people, as the nation supposed to be a light to the world.

Yes, they failed in that largely. Nevertheless, they participated in the narrative of God himself—the foundations of union with Christ in the Old Testament.

First of all, identification, and I'll say it again: I'm going to use the same three points. Identification, incorporation, participation. For the Old Testament, the Synoptics, and Acts.

Identification, God's covenantal presence with his people. From the beginning, God identifies with his people. He makes them in his image, Genesis 1:27, and the first question he asks guilt-ridden Adam after the fall is, where are you? Genesis 3:9 shows God's ongoing desire, his ongoing desire to be present with his people despite their sin and rebellion.

God identifies himself with a particular family in choosing Abram, who becomes Abraham, and establishing his covenant with him and his descendants in Genesis 12:15, and 17. Throughout the Old Testament story, God identifies with his people by

being present with them. His covenantal presence thus gives them a unique identity of all the peoples on the earth.

This theme becomes explicit as the story moves to God's making Israel his special people. Of course, where we're going with this is the identity of believers in Jesus as those who are in Christ. It is a wonderful truth.

It permeates Paul's letters. It is all over his introductions, as we will see later, sometimes surprising us. So, in 1 Corinthians 1, verse 2, Paul writes to the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours.

I give thanks to my God always, 1 Corinthians 1:4, because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus, and on he goes. The struggling Corinthian congregation had some unsaved members. 1 Corinthians 5, put the so-called brother out, Paul says, as he is offended at a circumstance Paul says is unknown among the pagans.

A man living with his has to be his stepmother, not his natural mother, living with his stepmother as a man lives with his wife. Put him out for his own sake, for the glory of God, and for his own sake, that he might repent. We think maybe he did.

If he's the fellow in 2 Corinthians, then Paul says, all right, he's repented. Take it easy on him, back off a little bit, accept him. If it's the same fellow, then that kind of story kind of follows. But, in any case, believers are identified in different ways in the New Testament.

The most common way, perhaps by way of title anyway, is as brothers, and we can certainly say brothers and sisters, but they are all over the place identified as those who are in Christ, in Christ Jesus, and so forth. The roots of that go back to Acts, to Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and all the way back to Old Testament history, when God gives an identity to his covenantal people, especially by his seeing fit to be their God, claiming them as his people, and dwelling in their midst. Exodus 25:8, and 9. The Lord is giving instructions.

Actually, he is soliciting contributions to build a tabernacle, specifically the most holy place, the holy place, and Most Holy Place. Exodus 25:8, and 9. And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst, exactly as I show you concerning the pattern of the tabernacle, and of all its furniture. So, you shall make it.

I understand there are different tabernacle models in different places around the country. There's one I have not visited in the south. Perhaps it's in Tennessee.

I might have my state wrong, but I am from the New Jersey, Pennsylvania area, the east, and I have visited the tabernacle built by the Mennonites, of which they give wonderful tours, and I was so impressed. They said everything is made according to biblical specifications, except where there aren't biblical specifications, and then they even let you know that which is beautiful. And you better believe it, those Mennonite women could do embroidery.

So, the veil and other things are just works of art, okay? Works of art, and the high priest breastplate, and the whole business. But here's what strikes you. They say, number one, the very existence of this tabernacle, and you're standing there, and it's to scale.

The one thing you don't have is the outer fence. They used a hedge, or they did at that time, 20 years ago, but it's at the right height. Number one, it shows God's desire to be present with his people.

Number two, the fence, the only entrance from the east, and all the necessity of sacrifice and so forth, says, first of all, the existence of the tabernacle says, come, and then all the other stuff says, no, wait. That is, they can only approach God through sacrifice, in God's ordained way, through his ordained priests, following God's patterns, and as it says here, according to the pattern of the Tabernacle. Hebrew speaks of that, and says God uses the earthly tabernacle to communicate to us about the heavenly tabernacle.

The meaning of that is the very presence of God and heaven itself. So that seeming contradiction between invitation and exclusion is overcome by God's graciously giving Israel a sacrificial cultus. Oh, the surrounding peoples had sacrifices in temples, priests, and altars, but theirs did not avail.

Hebrews 9:15 says, ultimately, it's because of Jesus' unique sacrifice to happen in the future, from the Old Testament perspective, that the Old Testament sacrifices did avail, and believing Israelites who came and confessed their sins over the animal that was to be sacrificed, were forgiven by God Almighty. Exodus 25:8 and 9, God gives them his law, and then he commands, let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst. 25:8 of Exodus.

God commands the people to build a tabernacle, a tent, where God's presence may dwell in their midst. That's the purpose of the tabernacle. The tabernacle is to be God's dwelling place in the midst of his people.

It is a tangible demonstration of God's desire to identify with his people by being present with them. He identifies with them. I am your God.

Genesis 17. Abraham, I will be God to you and to your seed. And, of course, the other side of the covenant is God claims Abraham.

When Abraham is willing to offer up Isaac, God says, now I know that you fear me. God's grace is all of God. Salvation is a monergism, a working of God alone.

The covenant is monergistic, but it is immediately, as soon as it grabs hold of people, bilateral. The people of God have more responsibility to God than those who don't know God. God sovereignly initiates the covenant with Abraham, walking between the pieces of the animals while Abraham's out cold.

How could you show monotheism any better than that? God sovereignly cuts the covenant, literally. But, so, it's all of him. It's monergistic.

But then, boom, Abraham's not his own. God claims his very life, family and future. Exodus 33.

Moses, certainly, as we'll see later, is an Old Testament, the, maybe, Old Testament covenant mediator. Of course, these covenant mediators, which include Adam, Noah, Moses, and David, come to mind; they all point toward the mediator of a new covenant, that is, Jesus. But Moses amazes me.

The people are so rebellious. God says, get out of the way. I'm going to blast these people. We're going to have enough of the Israelites.

I'm going to make a new group. I think I want to call it the Mosesites. Moses, the meekest man on earth, stands in the presence of God and dissents.

No, Lord, please don't do that for the sake of your name. Unbelievable. Here in Exodus 33, Moses has the audacity to ask Almighty God to show him his glory, which leads to the defining revelation of the divine name in Exodus 34.

Exodus 33. God's identity is important for his people. After the incident of the golden calf, shame on Israel, shame on Aaron.

I threw this in the fire, and this came out. I threw the metal. Oh, Aaron, Aaron.

Blame shifting starts in the Garden of Eden. And Adam said, Lord, you're right. I confess, I repent.

I misled my wife. Please blame me and not her. No, he doesn't.

He blames his wife and indirectly, God, who gave her to him. Blame shifting started. And Aaron's thing is so lame.

I threw the jewelry in the fire, and this calf came out. Oh, Aaron, Aaron, Aaron. We're too much like Aaron, aren't we? My theology of male headship says when neither party will move, it's between. It's the mountain and a parental scrap.

The husband should humble himself and apologize to his wife. That's what leadership means to me. Anyway, after the incident with the golden calf, God tells Moses that the people may go on to the promised land without his presence.

Yikes. Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey. Exodus 33, but I will not go up among you.

Lest I consume you on the way, for you are a stiff-necked people. Oh, my word. Go up to a man flowing with milk and honey ESV, but I will not go up among you.

Lest I consume you on the way, for you are a stiff-necked people. What a picture of obstinate rebellion and obedience to God, the stiff neck. Ah, literally.

How do God's people react? Verse four. When people heard this disastrous word, I was not going up with you in my presence. I'm not going to identify with you rebels anymore.

They mourned, but no one put on his ornaments. For the Lord had said to Moses, say to the people of Israel, you are a stiff-neck people. If for a single moment, I should go up with you, I would consume you.

Now, take off your ornaments so that I may know what to do with you. Therefore, the people of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments from Mount Horeb onward. Then Moses intercedes before the Lord on behalf of the people.

Exodus 33:15 and 16. Lord's Moses says to the Lord, his audacity just blows me away. If your presence will not go with me, do not bring us up from here.

For how shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight? I and your people, is it not in your going with us so that we are distinct? I and your people are from every other person on the face of the earth. There it is. The identity of these people is bound up with the presence of the living God who has made a covenant with them.

In spite of their awful rebellion and idolatry, Moses was getting the commandments on the mountain that prohibited idolatry. They are engaging in idolatry and other sins at the foot of the Mount of Mount Sinai. The basis of Moses' intercession is this.

The people need God's presence because it is his very presence that makes them who they are. Their identity as God's distinct people is based on the presence of the

Lord with them. The primary way that God identifies with his people, uniting himself to them, we might say, anticipating the New Testament doctrine of union with Christ, is by his commitment to be present with them.

Leviticus 26. Leviticus 26 raises a considerable problem. How in the world can a holy and just God dwell in the midst of such a sinful people? Leviticus 26:11 to 13.

I apologize. Oh, that's my problem. It's Leviticus, not Numbers.

Numbers 26 just wasn't cutting it; it was not cutting the mustard here. Leviticus 26. I apologize for my fumbling around.

11 through 13. I will make my dwelling among you, and my soul shall not abhor you, and I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people. I am the Lord, your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt that you should not be their slaves.

And I have broken the bars of your yoke and made you walk erect. How can a holy God be present with such a sinful people? Number one, God's character is both holy and just, as well as gracious and loving. We're thankful for a full biblical revelation of the character of God.

We, for the sake of trying to understand God, talk about his attributes or qualities one at a time, but we can give the false impression that his, I'll just say 18 attributes, I'm not sure how many there are, there are different ways of counting that, between 16 and 20 something perhaps, are like 18 pieces of a pie, and God is 1/18th holy and 1/18th loving and 1/18th what? No, no. God is all together, all-powerful, wise, loving, merciful, just, holy, everywhere present, and so forth. And the total picture of his, as the Puritans called it, perfections is so glorious because what would life be like if God were holy and just, and not patient, merciful, and loving? We would cringe before him.

What would life be like if he were loving, merciful, and faithful, and not powerful, not able to do anything about it, about our plight? Anyway, his attributes cohere in his person, and he is all together, all of his attributes at once, and he is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth, as the Westminster Shorter Catechism says, and we understand him in part, and we worship, as Saint Augustine said, even when we don't fully understand. That's good because we will never fully understand. For all eternity, the creator-creature distinction is valid.

God will always be infinite and eternal. We will always be his creatures, and that is one thing that will make heaven better than new heavens and new earth, fantastically and eternally interesting. We will never grow tired of God.

We will never plumb the depths of his being or be bored with him. His character is both holy and just, amen, and gracious and loving, amen. Aren't we glad? God is committed to his covenant relationships.

All three images from the passage, dwelling with his people, walking among his people, and being their God, speak of relationalism. The Bible contemplates God not so much in his invisible, eternal essence but as a God who enters in the covenant with his people, at least from Genesis 12 on, already mosaic covenant, and even there's some kind of covenant of creation or covenant of works in the garden. Good people have different takes on that, but surely there's a covenant going on from creation.

So we know God by virtue of his covenantal revelation that tells us about his covenantal relationships with his people. He's both holy and just, loving and gracious. He commits to his people in a relationship, and the images from Leviticus 26:11 to 13, dwelling with his people, walking among them, being their God, speak of that.

Leviticus establishes that God's presence with his people is a form of union, as we will actually see from Paul in 2 Corinthians 6:16. I can't help but read it. When Paul talks about the church's union with God in Christ, Paul quotes, you guessed it, the passage we just read.

2 Corinthians 6, Paul is opposing spiritual union with unbelief. The Corinthian men continue to go to pagan temples. No, Paul says.

First of all, have nothing to do with pagan prostitution, 1 Corinthians 6. You scandalize me, Paul says. Don't you understand? Union with Christ is permanent, and when you go and join your members as prostitutes, you are joining Christ as a prostitute. Horrors! Not only so, but in 1 Corinthians 10, speaking of the fact that believers that the Lord's Supper is a participation in the body and blood of Christ, he illustrates it by saying that the Corinthian, again, largely the foolish men in the congregation, are going to pagan temples and being involved with idols in some fashion.

No, Paul says. Demons are behind those things. That's the dark side.

Stay away from that. Of course, idols are nothing, and probably all food in Corinth was dedicated to some idol, but stay away from the temples. They are the center of iniquity and darkness, and there are sacrifices made to demons, not to God.

I do not want you to partake of the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons, he says, giving tremendous significance to the notion of believers participating in the body



and blood of Christ in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. After saying seven times, do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. Context isn't marriage.

Is marriage a religious union? Yes. Can this passage apply to marriage? Sure. But is it talking about marriage? No.

1 Corinthians 7 is talking about marriage. Seven times he says something like that. What agreement does the temple of God have with idols? Then he says, for we are the temple of the living God, as God said.

I'll make my dwelling among them and walk among them. I will be their God. They shall be my people.

And then he tells them to come out and to separate themselves from union with spiritual unbelief. And if they do, I'll be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty. It's noteworthy because it actually mentions daughters.

Preachers rightly talk about sonship. And, of course, it has to do with Jesus being the unique son and our getting his status by grace through faith. And so men and women are spoken of as sons.

But this is beautiful. It actually uses the expression there in 2 Corinthians 6. I'll be a father to you, and you be sons and daughters to me. It's beautiful.

I like it. Leviticus establishes that God's presence with his people is a form of union with God as we see from Paul's quotes in 2 Corinthians 6.16. The logic is that God has united himself with his people by his presence with them.

Isaiah 7, 10 to 14. I'm laboring these things because they're little known. It is also good for us to soak in both testaments in order to understand the message of the new.

It's incomprehensible, apart from the old. Isaiah 7. King Ahaz pretends he's spiritual, but God knows better. Oh, my word.

10 to 14. Again, the Lord spoke to Ahaz. Ask a sign of the Lord, your God.

Let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven. But Ahaz says I will not ask. I will not put the Lord to the test.

He is going against the command of God to do that. And he said to him, and he said, Hear then, O house of David, God speaks. Is it too little for you to weary men that you weary my God also? Therefore, the Lord himself will give you a sign.

Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name Emmanuel. Isaiah 7 gives a glimpse into how the idea of God's presence will play out in the unfolding of the biblical story. Isaiah prophesies to King Ahaz, who has looked for a deliverer.

Here's the key thing. Apart from the Lord, he's going to rely on political alliances. And God tells him that the ultimate deliverance for Israel will come from the Lord himself.

Verse 14, who will provide a son from the house of David as a sign of God's presence. He shall be called Emmanuel or God with us. You could translate God is with us.

Matthew 1:22, 23 shows these voice verses point to the arrival of Jesus as God's Messiah. I'd like to take the time to actually show the New Testament quotations, again, to tie the Testaments together as the Lord has done himself. Joseph was distraught.

He could not understand. Had Mary been unfaithful to him? It just didn't make any sense. She was pregnant.

And then in a dream, the Lord reveals the truth. To him, this was not of human doing, but of divine. Matthew 1:22.

Well, first of all, 20, Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife. For that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. Matthew's more concise than Luke.

He just summarized it this way. She'll bear a son. You'll call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which means God with us. Isaiah 7 thus points forward to the arrival of Jesus as Israel's Messiah.

One more text. Ezekiel 37. I've deliberately splashed these across the Old Testament to show the breadth of witness to these truths, these foundational truths that will come to their fulfillment in the people of God's identity in union with Christ individually and corporately.

Ezekiel 37. David, one of several Old Testament covenant mediators, prefigures the greater David, the Messiah, who will be Israel's shepherd king forever in the land. He will make an everlasting covenant of peace with them, and he, the sanctifier, will put his sanctuary in the midst of them and their descendants.

In fulfillment of covenant promises, God will dwell with them. He will be their God, and they will be his people. Ezekiel 37, starting with 24.

My servant David shall be king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd. They shall walk in my rules and be careful to obey my statutes. They shall dwell in the land that I give to my servant Jacob, where your fathers lived.

They and their children and their children's children shall dwell there forever. And David, my servant, shall be their prince forever. I will make a covenant of peace with them.

It shall be an everlasting covenant with them, and I will set them in their land and multiply them and will set my sanctuary in their midst forevermore. My dwelling place shall be with them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Then the nations will know that I am the Lord who sanctifies Israel when my sanctuary is in their midst forevermore.

Although good people debate this, I understand it ultimately as a prophecy concerning spiritual Israel, the people of God obeying him, and his Christ the King, the true mediator in the new earth forever. God will give them peace, sanctify them, and dwell among them in complete fulfillment of his previous covenant promises. Thus, God's presence with his people is eschatological as well, pointing forward to a future when God's presence with his people is established eternally.

One of the pictures of heaven or final salvation is the presence of God. We see it in the Garden of Eden, in the words concerning after the fall. Adam and Eve of Moses write I heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden.

They were used to that sound, but what they did next, they were not used to. They hid themselves from God. How foolish.

They knew the sound of God fellowshiping with them, but they hid themselves from him. The Old Testament history could easily be studied in light of the presence of God. There was the pillar of fire by night, pillar of cloud by day, going with Israel, stopping when they were to stop, going when they were to go.

Visible, supernatural manifestations like columns, one with a cloud, one with a fire. You might consider it a divine nightlight for the people of God. Still, they rebelled and sinned against the Lord and engaged in the sins of 1 Corinthians 10, which Paul warns New Testament Christians to avoid.

Grumbling, sexual immorality, idolatry, and something else. That'll teach me to just go with an aside. The testing God.

Yep, testing God is another one. These things are written for our benefit, Paul says, and no temptation has taken you besides as is common to God. Take heed, he says, first of all.

He says no temptation is unique, but God will provide the way of escape that you may be able to bear. Don't walk in the ways of your Old Testament, of the Old Testament people of God, in rebellion against God. Three pictures, three motifs, identification, incorporation, and, thirdly, participation.

Conclusion of the first, God's commitment to unite himself to his people by his identifying presence is fulfilled ultimately in his identification with them by becoming one of them. As the eternal Son of God takes to himself flesh, that is, a human body and soul, God's ultimate commitment to identify with his people in union with them is his sending his Son in the likeness of human flesh, Philippians 2, 7. He who existed in the form of God took the form of a servant. Being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death, even cross death, Paul says, even death on the cross, to deliver his people and to make them one with himself and one another.

In Christ's incarnation, God dwells, double meaning John 1, 14, the word became flesh and dwelt among us. Skenao means to dwell. It also means to tabernacle.

John's using double meaning. In Christ's incarnation, God dwells, he tabernacles among his people, his glory is veiled by the flesh of Christ, and yet it is manifested in the transfiguration of our Lord. In Christ's incarnation, God dwells with his people and reaffirms his commitment to be with them always.

Compare Jesus' words at the end of Matthew's Gospel with the Great Commission, and behold, I am with you always to the end of the age. When Christ sends the Spirit at Pentecost to be with New Testament believers and to unite them to Himself, he gives them this identity. They are in Christ as God's people.

I'll say it again, we're not claiming the Old Testament teaches union with Christ. We are claiming it lays foundations, especially in this regard, with identity, the covenantal presence of God, identifying him as their God and them as his people, which is the foundation. That is sort of part of the background against which we are to understand union with Christ in the incarnation of the Son and his pouring out the Spirit at Pentecost.

Those things do not come in a void. They come in the train, the unfolding drama of biblical special revelation, and its roots are in the Old Testament. In our next lecture, we'll take up the second of the three aspects or pictures, which are incorporation and membership in God's covenantal people.

This is Dr. Robert Peterson in his teaching on the Holy Spirit and union with Christ.  
This is session 5, Foundations for Union with Christ, Old Testament Identification.