

# Dr. Robert A. Peterson, Christ's Saving Work, Session 20, Conclusion: 6 Pictures, Directions Resources from NotebookLM

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

## 1. Abstract of Peterson, Christ's Saving Work, Session 20, Conclusion: 6 Pictures, Directions, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

**Dr. Robert Peterson's** teaching concludes his series on **Christ's saving work** by summarizing **six key biblical pictures** that illustrate how Christ meets humanity's needs through his death and resurrection. While acknowledging multiple scriptural images, Peterson outlines his criteria for identifying these major pictures and emphasizes the **importance of each** for understanding the atonement. Although all six are valuable, Peterson argues that **penal substitution** is foundational, supporting this claim through redemptive history and its relationship to other themes like redemption, reconciliation, and Christus Victor. Ultimately, Peterson contends that Christ's saving work has **three directions**: toward God (most fundamental), toward our enemies, and toward humanity and creation, with the latter two being derivative of the Godward dimension.

**2. 22 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of  
Dr. Peterson, Christ's Saving Work, Session 20 – Double click  
icon to play in Windows media player or go to the  
Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link  
there (Theology → Theology, Peterson → Christology).**



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### 3. Briefing Document: Peterson, Christ's Saving Work, Session 20, Conclusion: 6 Pictures, Directions

#### Briefing Document: Dr. Robert A. Peterson on Christ's Saving Work (Session 20)

##### Overview:

This briefing document summarizes the main themes and important ideas presented by Dr. Robert A. Peterson in Session 20 of his teaching on "Christ's Saving Work," focusing on the six major "pictures" of this work and the three primary "directions" it encompasses. Peterson concludes his lecture series by emphasizing the importance of understanding all six pictures while arguing for the foundational nature of penal substitution and the primacy of the Godward direction of Christ's saving acts.

##### Main Themes:

1. **Six Pictures of Christ's Saving Work:** Peterson identifies six major biblical themes or "pictures" that illustrate the multifaceted nature of Christ's saving work, primarily through his death and resurrection. He emphasizes that these pictures portray the same underlying reality, meeting our needs through God's Son. Each picture is deemed important for a comprehensive understanding.
  - Peterson acknowledges John McIntyre's list of thirteen images in "The Shape of Soteriology" (e.g., ransom, redemption, sacrifice, propitiation, reconciliation, victory). While not adhering to this exact number, Peterson agrees that Scripture uses multiple themes.
  - His criteria for identifying the six major pictures are:
    - Appearance across the biblical canon with Old Testament roots.
    - Occurrence in a significant number of passages.
    - Theological significance.
    - Recognition in historical theology.
  - He refrains from definitively listing the six pictures in this excerpt but mentions "second Adam New Creation" as a particularly neglected picture.
  - **Key Quote:** "We have thought more about Christ's saving events, and now we're summarizing for the final time the six major pictures of his saving work, and we just said the pictures portray the same reality. There are six different ways of

showing our needs and God using his son to meet our needs in his saving events, especially his death and resurrection. One more thing to say is that each picture is important."

- **Key Quote:** "Thus, it is a mistake to champion one picture by downplaying the import of the others, as we saw that many figures in the history of the doctrine of atonement have done."
1. **Foundational Nature of Penal Substitution:** Despite advocating for the importance of all six pictures, Peterson concludes that penal substitution is foundational to the others. This stance marks a shift from his previous hesitations about identifying a single "master metaphor."
    - He provides nine reasons for this conclusion, categorized under:
    - **Redemptive History:** Isaiah 53 unmistakably teaches legal substitution through the language of vicarious suffering and sin-bearing. The influence of Isaiah 52:13-53:12 on New Testament writers is significant (41 NT passages listed). The ransom saying in Mark 10:45 (and Matthew 20:28) teaches both redemption and penal substitution. Hebrews 2:17 (propitiation) and 9:23 (purifying heaven) underscore substitution.
    - **Key Quote (on Isaiah 53):** "Jesus' vicarious suffering and death will bear the iniquities of those who, having thought he was suffering under the judgment of God for his own sin, now realize that it was actually our sorrows, transgressions, iniquities, and sins that were laid upon him."
    - **Key Quote (on Mark 10:45):** "Jesus serves men by giving his life as a ransom to many." Howard Marshall interprets this against Psalm 49:7-9, where humanity cannot ransom itself, suggesting Christ's death as the ransom price paid to God.
    - **Key Quote (from William Lane on Hebrews):** "The making of propitiation for sins exhibits the primary concern of the high priestly office with the reconciliation of the people to God. The concept implies sacrifice, and in this context, the propitiatory work of the Son consisted in the laying down of his life for others."
    - **Pictures of Christ's Work:** Most other pictures of Christ's work include legal substitution. Redemption, while more than substitution, includes it (Galatians 3:13: Christ becoming a curse for us). Reconciliation is based on penal substitution (2 Corinthians 5:21: Christ made sin for us). Christus Victor is subordinate to legal substitution, as victory over principalities and powers (Colossians 2:14-15, Revelation 5:5-9) occurs because Christ paid the debt.

- **Key Quote (on Galatians 3:13, quoting Graham Cole):** "it is hard to imagine a plainer statement of the doctrine of penal substitution."
  - **Key Quote (from Linda Bellville on 2 Corinthians 5:21):** "if our debts are not posted to our account, according to verse 19, it is because someone else has legally assumed them much as a scapegoat did on the day of atonement, Leviticus 16, and the guilt offering did on other occasions, Leviticus 4 and 5."
  - **Key Quote (from F.F. Bruce on Colossians 2:14-15):** "...our penal substitute is the victor. And his paying the penalty in our place turns the tables on them and they are routed as God meets his own legal demands and thereby strips the principalities and powers of their weapons and of any dignity that they had. Penal substitution is fundamental to Christ as victor."
  - **Prominence:** Legal substitution is prominent in both the Old and New Testaments, with deep roots in Old Testament sacrificial theology.
  - **The Godward Direction:** Propitiation, central to penal substitution, constitutes a key aspect of the Godward direction of Christ's work.
1. **Three Directions of Christ's Saving Work:** Peterson proposes that Christ's saving accomplishment points in three directions:
    - **Upward (Toward God himself):** This is the most fundamental and profound direction. It includes penal substitution (satisfying God's justice), the Godward aspect of reconciliation, Christ's work as sacrifice (purifying heaven), the second Adam motif (obedience to the Father), and potentially redemption (paying a price, logically to God). Peterson emphasizes that God in Christ affects God, highlighting the greatness of God's grace, the mystery of the incarnation, and the framework of the covenant.
    - **Key Quote:** "Most profoundly, the death and resurrection of Christ are directed toward God. Incredibly, the work of Christ affects the life of God himself."
    - **Key Quote:** "God propitiates his own justice by bearing the brunt of his wrath in Christ."
    - **Key Quote:** "With the Godward direction of the work of Christ, the other two directions, without the Godward direction, the other two would not exist. They are very important, but derivative of the influence of Christ's work on God himself."

- **Downward (Toward our enemies):** This is exemplified by the Christus Victor theme, where Christ's death and resurrection defeat the devil, demons, the world, death, and hell. Reconciliation and redemption also have a downward aspect, delivering us from the domain of darkness. This direction is seen as a derivative of the upward direction.
- **Key Quote:** "It is the genius of the Christus Victor theme that directs Christ's death and resurrection toward our foes. Christ's work routes the devil, his demons, the world, rightly considered, death and hell."
- **Horizontal (Toward human beings and creation):** All themes of Christ's work pertain to saving people from their sins. This includes reconciliation (peacemaking with God and people), redemption (purchasing slaves of sin), legal substitution (bringing forgiveness), Christus Victor (delivering us from spiritual foes), second Adam (restoring God's image), and sacrifice (purifying us). Crucially, this direction also includes the creation, which will be renewed due to the cross and empty tomb (Colossians 1:19-20, Romans 8:20-22). While prevalent in Scripture, this direction is also seen as derivative of the upward direction.
- **Key Quote:** "All the themes of the work of Christ pertain to human beings because, as God told Joseph, you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins, Matthew 1:21."
- **Key Quote:** "Given the fall, why will there be a new heavens and a new earth? The answer is because of the cross and the empty tomb. The work of Christ has cosmic effects."
- 1. **Mystery and Limits of Understanding:** Peterson acknowledges the profound mystery inherent in Christ's saving work, particularly the incarnation and how God influences himself. He emphasizes that our current understanding is partial and full comprehension will come in the future (1 Corinthians 13:12). This should lead to gratitude, worship, service, and witness.
- **Key Quote:** "We cannot fully comprehend the Incarnation. How shall we plumb the depths of the cross and empty tomb? We understand in part, and awaiting the day when we shall understand in full, we worship, serve, and witness."
- **Key Quote:** "Oh, the depth of the riches, wisdom, and knowledge of God, how unsearchable his judgments are, and how inscrutable his ways are." (Romans 11:33)

**Important Ideas and Facts:**

- Scripture uses multiple "pictures" or themes to describe Christ's saving work.
- Downplaying any of these pictures to elevate another is a mistake.
- Penal substitution is argued to be foundational to the other pictures based on its presence in redemptive history, its integration within other themes, its prominence in Scripture, and its connection to the Godward direction.
- Christ's saving work has three primary directions: upward (to God), downward (to our enemies), and horizontal (to humanity and creation).
- The upward direction, focusing on God's satisfaction, reconciliation with himself, and the purification of heaven, is presented as the most fundamental and profound.
- The horizontal and downward directions are seen as derivative of the upward direction.
- The work of Christ has cosmic implications, leading to the renewal of creation.
- The saving work of Christ is ultimately a profound mystery that surpasses full human comprehension, inspiring worship and gratitude.

**Conclusion:**

Dr. Peterson concludes his lecture series by reiterating the massive, profound, and magnificent nature of Christ's saving work. He underscores the importance of appreciating its multifaceted nature through the lens of the six biblical pictures while firmly asserting the foundational role of penal substitution and the primacy of its Godward direction. The lecture ends with a call to worship and acknowledge the inherent mystery of God's saving acts in Christ.

## 4. Study Guide: Peterson, Christ's Saving Work, Session 20, Conclusion: 6 Pictures, Directions

### Christ's Saving Work: A Study Guide

#### Quiz

1. According to Peterson, what are the four criteria he uses to identify the major pictures of Christ's saving work? Briefly list each criterion.
2. Peterson identifies six main pictures of Christ's saving work. Name three of these pictures, as mentioned in the text.
3. Despite acknowledging the importance of all six pictures, Peterson argues for the foundational nature of one. Which picture does he consider foundational and why?
4. Explain how Peterson uses Isaiah 53 to support the idea of legal substitution in Christ's saving work. Provide a key phrase or concept from this Old Testament passage.
5. How does Peterson connect the Christus Victor theme with legal substitution, referencing the passages in Colossians 2?
6. What does Peterson mean by the "upward direction" of Christ's saving work? Give one example of a picture of Christ's work that illustrates this direction.
7. Describe the "horizontal dimension" of Christ's saving work and provide a biblical example of its impact.
8. What does Peterson mean by the "downward direction" of Christ's saving work? Which of the six pictures primarily illustrates this direction?
9. According to Peterson, how does Christ's saving work impact the creation itself? Cite a New Testament passage mentioned in support of this.
10. In his conclusion, Peterson emphasizes the profound and incomprehensible nature of Christ's saving work. What are two reasons he gives for this sense of awe and mystery?

#### Answer Key

1. Peterson's four criteria for identifying major pictures are: appearance across the biblical canon with roots in the Old Testament, occurrence in a good number of passages, theological significance, and recognition in historical theology.
2. Three of the six main pictures of Christ's saving work mentioned in the text are: penal substitution, second Adam/new creation, and Christus Victor. Other possibilities include redemption, reconciliation, and sacrifice.
3. Peterson considers penal substitution to be foundational to the others. He argues this based on redemptive history (like Isaiah 53), its inclusion in other pictures, its prominence in Scripture, and its centrality to the Godward direction of Christ's work.
4. Peterson states that Isaiah 53 unmistakably teaches legal substitution through the language of sacrificial substitution and vicarious sin-bearing. He highlights verses where it says our transgressions and iniquities were laid upon him.
5. Peterson argues that in Colossians 2:14-15, the victory over principalities and powers (Christus Victor) is secured because Christ paid our debt by having the "bill of indebtedness" nailed to the cross (penal substitution). The victory follows the satisfaction of the legal demands.
6. The "upward direction" of Christ's saving work refers to how it is directed toward God himself and affects the life of God. Penal substitution is an example, as God propitiates his own justice by bearing his wrath in Christ.
7. The "horizontal dimension" of Christ's saving work pertains to its impact on human beings, involving their salvation. Matthew 1:21, where Jesus is named because he will save his people from their sins, illustrates this dimension.
8. The "downward direction" of Christ's saving work is directed toward our enemies, such as the devil, demons, and death. The Christus Victor theme primarily illustrates this direction, as Christ's death and resurrection defeat these foes.
9. Peterson states that the work of Christ has cosmic effects, leading to a new heavens and a new earth. He cites Colossians 1:19-20, which says God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, making peace by the blood of his cross, and Romans 8:20-22 about the creation being set free.
10. Peterson gives reasons such as the inherent mystery of the incarnation and the profound idea that God himself acts through Christ's death and resurrection to influence himself, satisfying his justice.



## Essay Format Questions

1. Critically analyze Peterson's argument for the foundational nature of penal substitution in understanding Christ's saving work. Discuss the strengths and potential weaknesses of his reasoning, considering the importance he also places on the other five pictures.
2. Explain the three directions of Christ's saving work as outlined by Peterson: upward, horizontal, and downward. Provide biblical examples for each direction and discuss why Peterson considers the upward direction to be the most fundamental.
3. Discuss the significance of the six major pictures of Christ's saving work identified by Peterson for a comprehensive understanding of the atonement. Why is it important to consider all of these pictures rather than focusing on just one?
4. Explore the relationship between legal substitution and other pictures of Christ's saving work, such as redemption, reconciliation, and Christus Victor, as presented by Peterson. How does he argue that substitution undergirds and informs these other themes?
5. Reflect on Peterson's concluding thoughts regarding the profound mystery and magnificence of Christ's saving work. How does the concept of God acting towards himself in the atonement contribute to this sense of awe and limited human understanding?

## Glossary of Key Terms

- **Atonement:** The work Christ did in his life and death to reconcile humanity to God. It addresses the problem of sin and its consequences.
- **Penal Substitution:** The doctrine that Christ died in the place of sinners, bearing the penalty (divine wrath) that they deserved for their sins.
- **Reconciliation:** The restoration of friendly relations between God and humanity, made possible through Christ's atoning work.
- **Propitiation:** The act of appeasing or satisfying God's wrath against sin through Christ's sacrifice.
- **Expiation:** The removal or covering of sin through Christ's sacrifice.
- **Christus Victor:** A model of the atonement that emphasizes Christ's victory over the powers of evil, such as Satan, sin, and death, through his death and resurrection.
- **Second Adam/New Creation:** A picture of Christ as the perfect representative of humanity who undoes the sin of Adam and brings about a new creation and restored humanity.
- **Legal Substitution:** Similar to penal substitution, emphasizing the legal aspect of Christ taking the sinner's place under the law and bearing its curse.
- **Vicarious:** Acting or done for another; substitutionary.
- **Propitiatory:** Having the character or effect of propitiation; serving to appease or conciliate.
- **Redemptive History:** The unfolding story of God's saving actions in history, culminating in the work of Jesus Christ.
- **Godward Direction:** The aspect of Christ's saving work that is primarily directed toward God himself, influencing God's own being and justice.
- **Horizontal Dimension:** The aspect of Christ's saving work that relates to its impact on human beings and the creation.
- **Downward Direction:** The aspect of Christ's saving work that is directed toward and triumphs over humanity's enemies (spiritual forces of evil).

## 5. FAQs on Peterson, Christ's Saving Work, Session 20, Conclusion: 6 Pictures, Directions, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

### Frequently Asked Questions: Christ's Saving Work

**1. What are the six major biblical pictures of Christ's saving work identified in this lecture, and why are they considered important?** The six major biblical pictures of Christ's saving work identified are: Second Adam/New Creation, Ransom, Redemption, Sacrifice, Propitiation, Expiation, Atonement, Reconciliation, Victory (Christus Victor), and Penal Substitution. These pictures are considered important because each one offers a distinct perspective on our needs and how God, through Jesus Christ's death and resurrection, meets those needs. Each picture, grounded in the Old Testament, appearing in numerous passages, possessing theological significance, and recognized in historical theology, contributes to a fuller understanding of the cross and the empty tomb. It is a mistake to prioritize one picture while neglecting others.

**2. Among these six pictures, which one does the lecturer argue is foundational, and what are some of the reasons provided for this conclusion?** The lecturer concludes that Penal Substitution is foundational to the other five pictures. The reasons for this stance are categorized under redemptive history, pictures of Christ's work, prominence, and the Godward direction. Arguments from redemptive history include the legal substitution taught in Isaiah 53, the interpretation of the ransom saying in Mark 10:45 as including penal substitution, and the substitutionary notes sounded in Hebrews 2:17 and 9:23. Furthermore, most other pictures of Christ's work, such as redemption and reconciliation, include or are based upon legal substitution. Even the Christus Victor theme is argued to rely on penal substitution for its explanatory power. Finally, penal substitution is seen as the most important aspect of the Godward direction of Christ's work.

**3. What is meant by the "directions" of Christ's saving work, and what are the three directions discussed?** The "directions" of Christ's saving work refer to the primary targets or spheres of influence of Jesus' death and resurrection. The three directions discussed are: the upward direction (toward God himself), the downward direction (toward our enemies), and the horizontal direction (toward human beings and the whole creation). These directions help to conceptualize the multifaceted impact of Christ's saving accomplishment.

**4. How is Christ's saving work directed "upward" towards God, and which of the six pictures are most relevant to this direction?** Christ's saving work is directed upward towards God in profound ways, affecting the life of God himself. Penal substitution is primarily directed toward God, as God propitiates his own justice in Christ. Other relevant themes include the Godward aspect of reconciliation, the work of Christ as a sacrifice that purifies even the heavenly sanctuary, the second Adam's obedience to the Father, and potentially redemption. The lecturer argues that this upward dimension is the most fundamental and profound, with the other two directions being derivative of it.

**5. In what ways is Christ's saving work directed "downward" towards our enemies, and how does penal substitution relate to this direction?** Christ's saving work is directed downward towards our enemies, such as the devil, demons, the world (rightly considered), death, and hell. The Christus Victor theme primarily captures this direction, showing Christ's triumph over these foes. Crucially, the lecturer argues that this victory is secured through penal substitution. By paying the penalty for our sins, Christ disarms our enemies and demonstrates God's justice, thereby enabling his triumph over them. Reconciliation and redemption also have downward overtones, delivering us from the domain of darkness and enslavement.

**6. How does Christ's saving work have a "horizontal" dimension, affecting human beings and the creation?** The horizontal dimension of Christ's saving work pertains to its impact on human beings and the entire creation. All six pictures of Christ's work relate to saving people from their sins. Reconciliation brings peace between God and humanity. Redemption involves purchasing humanity from the slavery of sin. Penal substitution brings forgiveness. Christus Victor delivers us from our spiritual foes' clutches. As the second Adam, Christ restores God's image in us and dominion to us. As our sacrifice, he purifies us. Furthermore, Christ's saving work has cosmic effects, leading to the promise of a new heaven and a new earth, as God reconciles all things through the blood of his cross, and the creation is set free from its bondage to corruption.

**7. Why does the lecturer emphasize the importance of understanding all three directions of Christ's saving work (upward, downward, and horizontal)?** The lecturer emphasizes the importance of understanding all three directions because Christ's saving accomplishment, centered on his death and resurrection, has a comprehensive impact. It affects God himself (upward), our spiritual enemies (downward), and human beings and the creation (horizontal). Recognizing all three dimensions provides a more complete and biblical understanding of the scope and significance of Christ's work. While the horizontal dimension is more prevalent in Scripture, the upward dimension is argued to be the most fundamental, with the other two being derivative.

**8. What is the ultimate takeaway regarding the nature and comprehensiveness of Christ's saving work presented in this lecture?** The ultimate takeaway is that Christ's saving work is profound, massive, and magnificent. It is not exhaustively captured by any single picture or direction but encompasses a multifaceted reality that involves God's initiative, the satisfaction of his justice, the defeat of our enemies, the salvation of humanity, and the redemption of creation. While we can learn much about it through God's self-revelation, the depths of the Incarnation, the cross, and the empty tomb remain partially beyond our full comprehension, leading us to worship, serve, and witness with gratitude.