

# Dr. Robert A. Peterson, Christology, Session 11, Systematics: Incarnation Texts, Virgin Birth (Lk. 2) Resources from NotebookLM

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## **1. Abstract of Peterson, Christology, Session 11, Systematics: Incarnation Texts, Virgin Birth (Lk. 2), Biblicalelearning.org, BeL**

**Dr. Robert Peterson's Christology session focuses on the incarnation of Jesus Christ,** utilizing John 1:1-14 as a key passage to explore themes of revealer, life-giver, and Messiah. The lecture examines other significant texts like Philippians 2 and Colossians 1 to further illustrate the **deity and humanity of Christ** within the God-man concept. **The session also addresses the virgin conception of Jesus** as recorded in Luke 1 and Matthew 1, distinguishing it from the subsequent natural birth and contrasting it with aspects of Roman Catholic Mariology. Ultimately, the discussion emphasizes the **essential nature of the incarnation** for understanding Christ's person and work of salvation.

**2. 22 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Peterson, Christology, Session 11 – 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).**



**Peterson\_Christology\_Session11.mp3**

### 3. Briefing Document: Peterson, Salvation, Session 11, Systematics: Incarnation Texts, Virgin Birth (Lk. 2)

#### Briefing Document: Christology - Incarnation, Virgin Birth, and Luke 2

##### Overview:

This session of Dr. Peterson's Christology series focuses on the doctrine of the incarnation of the Son of God, primarily drawing from the Johannine Prologue (John 1:1-14), Philippians 2:6-7, and Colossians 1:15-20 & 2:9. It then transitions to a discussion of the virgin birth of Jesus, using Luke 1 as the primary text. The lecture emphasizes the pre-existence, deity, and humanity of Christ as foundational to the incarnation and highlights its significance for understanding salvation. It also addresses common misunderstandings and clarifies the biblical teaching on the virgin conception of Jesus.

##### Main Themes and Important Ideas:

##### 1. The Incarnation of the Son of God:

- **John 1:1-14 as a Foundational Text:** The Johannine Prologue is presented as the key passage affirming the incarnation. Peterson highlights several crucial themes introduced here:
- **Pre-existence:** The Son ("the Word") existed before the incarnation, with its background in Genesis 1.
- **The Incarnation Itself:** Described through the metaphor of the "Word became flesh."
- **Deity and Humanity:** Both are affirmed in this passage.
- **Revealer:** The pre-incarnate Son revealed God through creation, and the incarnate Son reveals God as the "Word incarnate," the "true light." He reveals God's glory, grace, and truth. Peterson notes John's use of "hyperbole" to emphasize the surpassing revelation in Jesus compared to the Old Testament: *"Compared to God's loving-kindness and faithfulness in the Old Testament, the New Testament in Jesus so far exceeds that, it makes the Old Testament look legal by comparison."*
- **Life-giver:** The Son was the source of creative life before the incarnation and gives eternal life to those who believe in him.

- **Witness:** The prologue introduces the theme of witness, exemplified by John the Baptist, which is further developed throughout John's Gospel.
- **God Became Human:** The core of the incarnation is that *"God himself became a human being in Jesus of Nazareth. The second person of the Trinity, the Eternal Son, the Word, the Light became one of us..."*
- **The Second Adam:** Drawing on Pauline theology (Romans 5, 1 Corinthians 15), Peterson explains that Christ is the "second man, the last Adam," who brings victory and eternal life to the redeemed race, contrasting with the fallenness brought by the first Adam. *"Adam, the human race in its fallenness and sin and death. Christ, the race of the redeemed... But first, Adam determines everyone's downfall. The second Adam brings victory and eternal life..."*
- **Mystery of the Incarnation:** The incarnation is presented as a profound mystery, akin to the Trinity itself, transcending human understanding but not being illogical. *"God is mysterious already in his three in oneness, let alone in the incarnation... the mystery of the incarnation lends itself to the mystery of the cross and then the empty tomb."*
- **Philippians 2:6-7:** This passage further illustrates the incarnation through the concept of Christ emptying himself ("kenosis") by taking the form of a servant and being born in human likeness. This self-humiliation is presented as the presupposition for the atonement. *"Christ Jesus, who though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God as a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men."* Peterson emphasizes that while becoming incarnate, Christ also *"remained the second person of the Trinity. The Trinity did not explode in the incarnation."* The passage also serves as an example of humility for believers.
- **Colossians 1:15-20 & 2:9:** These verses highlight Christ's deity and his role as the "image of the invisible God." Peterson recounts an anecdote to illustrate this point: *"if I want to see what God would say if he became a man, I should read what Jesus says. ... if I want to learn what God would do if he became a man, I should see what Jesus did... That's exactly the point. He is the visible image of God, the invisible one."* Colossians 1:19 states, *"in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell,"* which is further explained in Colossians 2:9: *"in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily."* This bodily indwelling is presented as the unique aspect of the incarnation, distinguishing Christ's relationship with God from the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in believers. *"When we point at this man, Jesus"*

*Christ, it is not only true he's indwelt by the Holy Spirit. It is true he is God in bodily form."* This passage also emphasizes that in Christ, believers have all they need, refuting the Colossian heresy.

- **Hebrews 1 & 2:** While primarily focusing on the deity and humanity of Christ respectively, Peterson notes their connection to the incarnation. Hebrews 1 provides five proofs of Christ's deity, including receiving worship and possessing divine attributes. Hebrews 2, drawing on Psalm 8, applies it to Christ as the second Adam who, through incarnation (being made lower than the angels, partaking in flesh and blood), fulfills humanity's intended dominion and achieves salvation. *"Since the children, verse 14, share in flesh and blood, he himself, that is, the Son, likewise partook of the same things, flesh and blood, incarnation. Why? To die, to defeat the devil, and deliver his spiritual sons and daughters."* The incarnation is presented as essential for Christ's roles as the second Adam, Christus Victor, and the great high priest.
- **Necessity of the Incarnation:** Peterson asserts that the incarnation is necessary for God's plan of salvation, given humanity's fallen state. *"Given God's commitment to save his ruined creation and rebellious creatures, namely us, then it is necessary for there to be the incarnation and even the death and resurrection of the son of God."*

## 2. The Virgin Birth (Virginal Conception):

- **Clarification of Terms:** Peterson clarifies that "virgin birth" more accurately refers to the "virginal conception" of Jesus, as the birth itself was a normal human process. *"Better, it's not the virgin birth. The birth is normal... It was a virginal conception. The conception of our Lord's humanity in Mary's womb was a miracle of God."*
- **Luke 1 as the Primary Account:** The annunciation to Mary by the angel Gabriel in Luke 1 is the central passage discussed. The account highlights:
- **Mary's Betrothal and Virginity:** Emphasizing the seriousness of Jewish betrothal and Mary's statement, *"How will this be since I am a virgin, literally, since I have not known a man?"*
- **The Angel's Explanation:** Gabriel explains that the conception will be through the Holy Spirit: *"The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore, the child to be born will be called Holy, the Son of*

God." This underscores the supernatural nature of the conception, with God as the initiator.

- **The Significance of the Child:** Gabriel announces that Jesus will be great, called the Son of the Most High, inherit the throne of David, and reign forever, fulfilling the Davidic covenant. *"He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The background for this language of sonship is royal... The difference is he's the God King. It's a divine title as well as a royal title."*
- **Mary's Obedient Response:** Despite not fully understanding, Mary responds with faith and submission: *"Behold, I'm a servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word."*
- **Matthew 1 (Mentioned):** This gospel provides the account from Joseph's perspective.
- **Addressing Misconceptions:** Peterson briefly touches on the Roman Catholic doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, clarifying that it refers to Mary being conceived free from original sin, which he states is not supported by Scripture. He quotes Mary's words in the Magnificat, *"my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,"* to argue against her sinlessness at conception.
- **Avoiding Unbiblical Maryology:** Peterson cautions against elevating Mary to a position beyond what Scripture teaches, specifically rejecting veneration, prayer to her, the title of co-redemptrix, and the doctrine of the bodily assumption. *"No, all things must be tested by the Word of God, and if it doesn't teach something, we cannot teach it, and it does not teach those aspects of Maryology."*

### 3. Luke 2 (Mentioned):

- The session title includes "Luke 2," indicating that the subsequent portion of the lecture will likely address the events surrounding Jesus' birth, though this content is not detailed in the provided excerpts.

### Conclusion:

This session lays a crucial foundation for understanding the person and work of Jesus Christ by examining the biblical doctrine of the incarnation through key New Testament texts. It emphasizes the deity and humanity of Christ, the mystery and necessity of his becoming human, and the unique nature of his virginal conception. The lecture also serves to clarify biblical teaching and address potential misunderstandings or unbiblical additions to these core Christian doctrines.

## 4. Study Guide: Peterson, Salvation, Session 11, Systematics: Incarnation Texts, Virgin Birth (Lk. 2)

### Christology: Incarnation, Virgin Birth, and Johannine Themes Study Guide

#### Quiz

1. According to John 1:1-14, what are two key aspects of the Son of God's pre-incarnate existence and how do these relate to his incarnate ministry?
2. Explain John's use of hyperbole in John 1:17 regarding grace and truth. What is he emphasizing about Jesus Christ?
3. Describe the "two-Adam" theology presented in the text. How do Adam and Christ function as representative figures?
4. According to Philippians 2:6-7, what action did Christ take in the incarnation, and what did he take on? What is the significance of this action?
5. How does Colossians 2:9 explain the fullness of deity dwelling in Christ? How does this differ from the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in believers?
6. What are two of the five great historical proofs for the deity of Christ mentioned in the discussion of Hebrews 1? Briefly explain each.
7. How does the writer of Hebrews apply Psalm 8 to Jesus Christ in Hebrews 2? What does this reveal about Christ's humanity and role?
8. Why does the text clarify that the doctrine being discussed is "virginal conception" rather than "virgin birth"? What is the significance of this distinction?
9. Summarize Mary's response to the angel Gabriel's announcement in Luke 1. What does this reveal about her character?
10. According to the text, what are some common but unbiblical teachings about Mary that should be avoided?

#### Answer Key for Quiz

1. The Son was the revealer of God through creation and the life-giver, with eternal life residing in the Logos. In his incarnate ministry, he continues as the revealer as the Word incarnate, speaking for God and revealing glory, grace, and truth, and as the life-giver, bestowing eternal life to those who believe.

2. John uses hyperbole to emphasize the surpassing nature of the grace and truth that came through Jesus Christ compared to the Old Testament. He doesn't mean there was no grace and truth before, but that in Jesus, it is so overwhelmingly manifest that it makes the previous revelation look minimal by comparison.
3. Adam is the representative head of the fallen human race, bringing sin and death. Christ, the second Adam, is the representative head of the redeemed race, bringing victory and eternal life through regeneration and resurrection to those who believe.
4. In the incarnation, Christ Jesus emptied himself (kenosis) by taking the form of a servant (doulos) and being born in the likeness of men. This self-humiliation is the necessary presupposition for his subsequent obedience to death and atonement.
5. Colossians 2:9 states that the whole fullness of deity dwells in Christ bodily. This differs from the Spirit's indwelling in believers because, while believers have the whole Holy Spirit, the fullness of deity resides in Christ in a unique, corporeal way, signifying that he is God in bodily form.
6. Two proofs are: (1) Divine titles are ascribed to him in a way only fitting for God, indicating his inherent divine nature. (2) He does the works that only God does, such as creation and providence, demonstrating his divine power and role.
7. The writer applies Psalm 8 to Jesus as the second Adam, who was made a little lower than the angels (incarnation) but is now crowned with glory and honor because of his suffering and death. This fulfills and surpasses the original dominion given to humanity, showcasing Christ's role in redemption.
8. The text clarifies that it is virginal conception because the birth itself was likely a normal human birth. The miraculous element is the conception of Jesus' humanity in Mary's womb without the involvement of a human father, highlighting God's supernatural intervention.
9. Mary responds with a practical question about how this will happen since she is a virgin, showing she doesn't doubt God's word but seeks understanding. Her final response, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word," demonstrates her faith and submission to God's will.
10. Some unbiblical teachings about Mary include the Immaculate Conception (being conceived without original sin), directing veneration or prayer to her, regarding her as the co-redemptrix, and the teaching that she was bodily assumed into heaven without dying.

## Essay Format Questions

1. Discuss the significance of the Johannine prologue (John 1:1-18) for understanding the doctrine of the incarnation. Analyze at least three key themes presented in this passage and explain how they contribute to a comprehensive understanding of who Jesus Christ is.
2. Compare and contrast the presentations of the incarnation in Philippians 2:5-11 and Colossians 1:15-20. What unique aspects does each passage emphasize regarding the nature and purpose of Christ's coming in the flesh?
3. Evaluate the necessity of the virgin birth (virginal conception) for the Christian understanding of salvation. How does this miraculous event relate to the sinlessness of Christ and his role as the second Adam?
4. Explore the Old Testament background of the concepts of "grace and truth" and "Son of God" as they are applied to Jesus Christ in the New Testament texts discussed. How does understanding their Old Testament context enrich our comprehension of Christology?
5. Analyze the relationship between the deity and humanity of Christ as presented in the selected texts (John 1, Philippians 2, Colossians 1, Hebrews 1-2). How do these passages affirm both aspects of his nature, and why is it crucial to hold both truths in tension?



## Glossary of Key Terms

- **Incarnation:** The act by which the eternal Son of God took on human nature, becoming both fully God and fully human in the person of Jesus Christ.
- **Pre-existence:** The doctrine that the Son of God existed in divine form before his incarnation in human flesh.
- **Logos (Word):** A Greek term used by John to refer to the eternal Son of God, the agent of creation and revelation.
- **Hyperbole:** The use of deliberate exaggeration for emphasis or effect.
- **Hesed v'emet (Grace and Truth):** Old Testament Hebrew terms signifying God's covenantal loving-kindness and faithfulness.
- **Kenosis:** The self-emptying of Christ in his incarnation, as described in Philippians 2, where he did not cling to his divine prerogatives.
- **Second Adam (Last Adam):** A Pauline title for Christ, contrasting him with Adam; Adam brought sin and death, while Christ brings righteousness and life to those united with him.
- **Atonement:** The work Christ did in his life and death to reconcile humanity to God and overcome the problem of sin.
- **Deity of Christ:** The doctrine that Jesus Christ is fully God, possessing all the attributes and nature of God.
- **Humanity of Christ:** The doctrine that Jesus Christ is fully human, possessing a true human body and soul, though without sin.
- **Virgin Birth (Virginal Conception):** The supernatural conception of Jesus in the womb of the Virgin Mary through the power of the Holy Spirit, without the involvement of a human father.
- **Theopneustos (God-breathed):** A Greek term used in 2 Timothy 3:16 to describe the nature of Scripture as being produced by God.
- **Messiah (Christ):** The Hebrew and Greek terms, respectively, for the anointed one, the promised deliverer and king of Israel.
- **Soteriology:** The branch of theology concerned with the doctrine of salvation.

## 5. FAQs on Peterson, Salvation, Session 11, Systematics: Incarnation Texts, Virgin Birth (Lk. 2), [Biblicalelearning.org](http://Biblicalelearning.org) (BeL)

### Frequently Asked Questions on Christology

**1. What is the significance of the incarnation of the Son of God according to the Johannine prologue (John 1:1-14)?** The Johannine prologue establishes the incarnation as the fundamental presupposition for the entire Gospel of John. It highlights several key aspects: the pre-existence of the Son (the Word), the act of incarnation itself ("the Word became flesh"), the deity of the Son (being with God and being God), and the humanity of the Son (coming into the world). Furthermore, it introduces crucial Johannine themes such as Jesus as the revealer of God, the giver of life (both creative and eternal), and the Christ (Messiah). The prologue underscores that through the incarnate Son, God is made known in a new and profound way, exceeding even the revelation in the Old Testament.

**2. In what ways is Jesus presented as the revealer of God in the provided text?** Jesus is presented as the ultimate revealer of God in several ways. As the pre-incarnate Son, he revealed God through creation. As the incarnate Word, he reveals God through his words, miracles (signs), and character. John 1:14 notes that his glory is "as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth," and verse 17 contrasts the giving of the law through Moses with the coming of "grace and truth through Jesus Christ." This signifies that Jesus reveals God's covenantal loving-kindness and faithfulness in a way that surpasses the Old Testament revelation. He makes God known manifestly and clearly.

**3. How does the text explain Jesus as the life-giver?** The text explains that Jesus was the life-giver even before his incarnation, as stated in John 1:3: "in him was life," and "all things were made through him." This refers to the eternal life resident in the Logos, through whom creation came into being. As the incarnate Son, Jesus continues to be the life-giver, now offering eternal life to those who receive him and believe in his name, granting them the right to become children of God (John 1:12-13). This new, spiritual birth is a key aspect of the life Jesus gives.

**4. What is the "two-Adam theology" mentioned in the text, and how does it relate to the incarnation?** The "two-Adam theology," drawing from Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15, posits Adam as the head of the fallen human race, bringing sin and death. In contrast, Christ, referred to as the "second man" and "last Adam," is the head of the redeemed race, bringing victory and eternal life through regeneration and future resurrection. This theology is grounded in the creation of the first Adam and the incarnation of the second Adam (Christ). The incarnation, therefore, is the essential foundation for Christ's role in reversing the effects of Adam's sin and offering salvation.

**5. How do passages like Philippians 2:6-7 and Colossians 1:15-20 contribute to the understanding of the incarnation?** Philippians 2:6-7 illustrates the incarnation through the concept of Christ emptying himself ("kenosis"), taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men, and being found in human form. This passage emphasizes the humility of Christ in becoming incarnate. Colossians 1:15-20 presents Christ as "the image of the invisible God," highlighting his deity and his role in creation and reconciliation. Verse 19 states that "in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell," further emphasizing the divine presence in the incarnate Christ. Colossians 2:9 reinforces this by saying, "in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily," directly affirming the incarnation.

**6. Why does the text emphasize that the "virgin birth" is more accurately termed "virginal conception"?** The text clarifies that the miracle lies in the conception of Jesus in Mary's womb without the involvement of a human father, facilitated by the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:34-35). The birth itself was a natural process. Therefore, "virginal conception" is a more precise term to describe the supernatural event, distinguishing it from any notion of a miraculous or unusual birthing process.

**7. What is the theological significance of the virginal conception as presented in the text?** The virginal conception is presented as a unique act of God, similar in its miraculous nature to the creation of Adam and Eve. It underscores that Jesus' humanity was divinely initiated in Mary's womb. This miraculous conception is seen as an essential precondition for Jesus' sinless life and his subsequent atoning death and resurrection. It highlights the divine initiative in the incarnation and the special nature of the Son of God's entry into the world.

**8. How does the text address potential misunderstandings or incorrect teachings related to Mary and the virgin birth?** The text explicitly refutes several non-biblical teachings related to Mary, particularly those prevalent in Roman Catholicism. It clarifies that the Immaculate Conception refers to Mary being conceived free from original sin (a doctrine the text rejects based on Mary calling God her Savior in Luke 1:47) and not to Jesus' conception. The text also dismisses the idea of Mary's bodily assumption into heaven and her role as co-redemptrix. It emphasizes that while Mary was a favored and godly servant of the Lord deserving of respect, she should not be the object of veneration or prayer, as these practices are not supported by Scripture and detract from the worship due to God alone.