

# Dr. Robert A. Peterson, The Holy Spirit and Union with Christ, Session 7, Foundations Union OT & Synoptics

## Resources from NotebookLM

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

### 1. Abstract of Peterson, The Holy Spirit and Union with Christ, Session 7, Foundations Union OT & Synoptics, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Robert Peterson's lecture series explores the theological concept of union with Christ. This particular session, the seventh, examines the foundations for this doctrine as presented in the **Old Testament and the Synoptic Gospels**, and briefly touches on the **Book of Acts**. Peterson argues that while the Old Testament doesn't explicitly teach union with Christ, it **foreshadows it through concepts of identification, incorporation, and participation**. Similarly, the Synoptic Gospels lay a **redemptive-historical foundation** by establishing Jesus' identity and mission, preparing for the enactment of this union in the church, further seen in Acts.

### 2. 26 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Peterson, The Holy Spirit and Union with Christ, Session 7 – 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 → Holy Spirit and Union with Christ).



Peterson\_HolySpirit  
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### 3. Briefing Document: Peterson, The Holy Spirit and Union with Christ, Session 7, Foundations Union OT & Synoptics

#### Briefing Document: Foundations for Union with Christ in the Old Testament, Synoptics, and Acts

##### Overview:

This briefing document summarizes the main themes and important ideas presented by Dr. Robert A. Peterson in Session 7 of his teaching on "The Holy Spirit and Union with Christ." This session explores the foundations for the New Testament doctrine of union with Christ as foreshadowed in the Old Testament and presented in the Synoptic Gospels and the Book of Acts. Dr. Peterson argues that while the concept of "union with Christ" as a fully developed doctrine is largely absent in the Old Testament and emerges more explicitly later, these earlier texts lay essential groundwork through the themes of identification, incorporation, and participation.

##### Main Themes and Important Ideas:

##### I. Old Testament Foundations for Union with Christ:

Dr. Peterson emphasizes that the Old Testament *foreshadows* rather than explicitly teaches union with Christ. He identifies three key "big pictures" that provide this foundation:

- **Identification:** God's covenant presence with his people establishes their identity as his people, and he as their God. This anticipates the identity of New Testament saints "as those in Christ."
- Example: God's covenant with Israel: "They are his people, and he is their God."
- **Incorporation:** God incorporates a chosen people into a covenant community, relating to him through covenant mediators (Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David). The prophets foreshadow a coming covenant mediator who will be both a Davidic King (Isaiah 9:6-7) and a suffering servant (Isaiah 53).
- Quote: "So, the covenant mediator to come will be a Davidic King, but also a suffering servant." (p. 1)
- The suffering servant, described in Isaiah 53 and applied to Jesus by Peter (1 Peter 2:21, 24), takes the punishment for sin, allowing many to be accounted righteous (Isaiah 53:11).

- Quote: "In his humiliation, the servant functions as a covenant mediator, taking the punishment his people deserve for their sin so that many may be accounted righteous." (p. 2)
- **Participation:** The Old Testament people of God share in the covenantal story through their relationship with God. This foreshadows the New Testament concept of believers participating in Jesus' death and resurrection (Colossians 2:20, 3:1; Ephesians 2:6).
- Quote: "While this idea becomes more explicit in the New Testament, the Old Testament views God's people as those who participate in the narrative God writes by being in relationship with him through covenants." (p. 2)

Dr. Peterson also highlights Old Testament passages promising God's Spirit within his people (Ezekiel 36:24-28, 37:11-14) as further foreshadowing the corporate indwelling of the Spirit connected to union with Christ in the New Testament. These passages speak of regeneration ("I will give you a new heart and a new spirit I will put within you," Ezekiel 36:26) and vivification by the Spirit ("I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live," Ezekiel 37:14).

## II. Foundations in the Synoptic Gospels:

The Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke) introduce Jesus as the Christ, the Messiah. While they contain few explicit references to "union with Christ," they lay the theological and redemptive-historical foundation for it by:

- **Establishing Jesus' Identity and Mission:** They answer the question of "who is this Christ?" to whom believers are united.
- **Presenting the Redeeming Work of Christ:** They narrate the events through which this union is made possible.

Dr. Peterson again uses the three themes:

- **Identification in Jesus as Emmanuel and Bridegroom: Emmanuel (God with us):** Matthew's Gospel presents Jesus as the fulfillment of Isaiah 7:14, "Emmanuel," signifying God's presence with his people (Matthew 1:23). This theme is bracketed by the promise at the beginning and Jesus' assurance at the end: "I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20).
- Quote (Quarles): "Matthew 1:23, the Emmanuel statement, and Matthew 28:20 serve to bracket the entire Gospel." (p. 6)

- **Bridegroom:** Jesus uses the imagery of a wedding to identify himself with his people (Matthew 9:14-15; Mark 2:19-20; Luke 5:34-35). He implicitly claims to be the "messianic bridegroom," with his people, the church, as the bride, echoing Old Testament imagery of Yahweh as the groom and Israel as the bride.
- Quote (Carson): "'Jesus' answer was implicitly Christological. He himself is the messianic bridegroom.'" (p. 7)
- **Incorporation through Jesus as Covenant Mediator Par Excellence:** The Synoptics depict Jesus as the ultimate representative of God's people, the "new and greater Israel."
- The Transfiguration (Luke 9:34-35) highlights Jesus as God's chosen Son, to whom we must listen, surpassing even Moses and Elijah.
- Quote (God's voice): "This is my son, my chosen one. Listen to him." (Luke 9:35, quoted on p. 8)
- Matthew's genealogy (Matthew 1:1-17) links Jesus to David and Abraham, Old Testament covenant mediators, establishing him as a greater mediator.
- Quote (Quarles): "Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Jesus is the new David, our King. He is the fulfillment of God's covenant with David. Jesus is the new Abraham, our founder." (p. 9)
- Jesus inaugurates the new covenant at the Last Supper (Luke 22:19-20), presenting himself as the mediator of this new covenant through his blood.
- **Participation in the Story of Jesus:** The Synoptics narrate the key events of Jesus' life – incarnation, sinless life, death, resurrection, and ascension – the story in which believers participate.
- The incarnation, the eternal Son becoming human (Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-38; Luke 2:6-7), is presented as a unique "hypostatic" or personal union of divine and human natures, which makes our union with him in salvation possible.
- Quote: "The unique incarnation of the Son of God is the basis for our union with him in salvation." (p. 10)

### III. Foundations in the Book of Acts:

While Acts focuses on the "what" of salvation rather than the "how" as explicitly as the Epistles, it continues to lay the foundation for union with Christ through the same three concepts:

- **Identification in the Ministry of the Holy Spirit and Paul's Conversion: Ministry of the Holy Spirit (Pentecost):** The descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2) is presented as the moment God publicly identifies with his people by indwelling them with his Spirit, fulfilling Old Testament prophecies (Ezekiel 36:27). This event initiates the Spirit's ministry of uniting people to Christ.
- Quote (Letham): "'The Spirit would come to indwell believers and unite them to Christ.'" (p. 12)
- **Conversion of Paul (Acts 9):** Jesus' question to Saul, "Why are you persecuting me?" (Acts 9:4-5), reveals Jesus' profound identification with his church. Persecution of believers is seen as persecution of Christ himself. This event was a catalyst for Paul's theology of union with Christ.
- Quote (David Peterson): "...the risen Christ viewed the persecution of his disciples as an attack upon himself, clearly identifying himself with the church." (p. 13)
- **Incorporation in the Rite of Christian Baptism:** Baptism in the name of Jesus becomes the mark of entrance into the new covenant community, signifying incorporation into Jesus and his people (Acts 2:38, 41). While Acts doesn't use explicit "in Christ" language, baptism in Jesus' name denotes belonging to him. \* Quote: "Baptism, in Jesus' name, is not so much a formulation of union with Christ as a statement of ownership." (p. 14)
- **Participation in the Repetition of Jesus' Story and Luke's Use of Isaiah's Suffering Servant:** This aspect will be discussed in the subsequent lecture.

### Conclusion:

Dr. Peterson concludes that the Old Testament, Synoptic Gospels, and the Book of Acts lay essential foundations for understanding the New Testament doctrine of union with Christ. The Old Testament foreshadows it through identification, incorporation, and participation within the covenant. The Synoptics present the identity and work of Jesus, the one to whom believers are united, highlighting his role as Emmanuel, bridegroom, and ultimate covenant mediator. Acts marks the beginning of the Spirit's ministry of uniting believers to Christ, particularly through Pentecost and baptism, and illustrates Jesus' identification with his people. These foundational elements provide the necessary context for the more explicit teachings on union with Christ found in the later New Testament writings.

## 4. Study Guide: Peterson, The Holy Spirit and Union with Christ, Session 7, Foundations Union OT & Synoptics

### Study Guide: Foundations for Union with Christ

#### Quiz:

1. According to Peterson, what two roles does the coming covenant mediator fulfill as foreshadowed in the Old Testament prophecies of Isaiah? Briefly describe each role.
2. What are the three "big pictures" in the Old Testament that lay the foundation for union with Christ, and how do they foreshadow this union?
3. Explain how Ezekiel 36:24-28 prefigures a key New Testament theme related to union with Christ. What specific promise is made in this passage?
4. Why does Peterson state that it is anachronistic to say the Old Testament teaches union with Christ? What term does he use instead to describe the relationship?
5. What are the two primary reasons Peterson gives for the relatively few explicit references to union with Christ in the Synoptic Gospels?
6. Describe how the Synoptic Gospels present Jesus as "Emmanuel" and how this concept relates to the idea of identification in union with Christ.
7. Explain the significance of Jesus referring to himself as the "bridegroom" in the Synoptic Gospels. According to the text, who is the implied bride?
8. How do the Synoptic accounts of the Transfiguration and the Last Supper contribute to the understanding of Jesus as the ultimate covenant mediator?
9. In the context of the Synoptic Gospels, what does "participation in the story of Jesus" mean for believers, and what foundational events are they called to share in?
10. According to Peterson, what is the primary emphasis of the book of Acts regarding salvation, and how does this influence its presentation of union with Christ?

#### Answer Key:

1. The coming covenant mediator will be both a Davidic King and a suffering servant. As the Davidic King (Isaiah 9), he will rule with justice and righteousness on

David's throne forever. As the suffering servant (Isaiah 53), he will be despised and rejected, bearing the griefs and iniquities of his people.

2. The three big pictures are identification (God's presence gives his people an identity), incorporation (they become a collective covenant people), and participation (they share in the covenantal story). These foreshadow union with Christ by establishing God's close relationship with his people, their collective identity, and their involvement in God's redemptive acts, all culminating in union with Christ.
3. Ezekiel 36:24-28 prefigures God's corporate indwelling of his people through the promise of putting his Spirit within them and giving them a new heart. The specific promise includes cleansing from uncleanness and idols, receiving a new heart and spirit, and the indwelling presence of God's Spirit leading to obedience.
4. Peterson states it's anachronistic because the Old Testament does not explicitly teach the New Testament doctrine of union with Christ as it is fully revealed in the person and work of Jesus. Instead, the Old Testament foreshadows union with Christ through various themes and patterns.
5. The two primary reasons are that the Gospels focus more on narrating Jesus' story than providing didactic explanations of its implications, and the redemptive-historical context means most narratives precede Christ's death and resurrection, the foundation of union with Christ.
6. The Synoptics present Jesus as "Emmanuel," meaning "God with us," referencing Isaiah 7:14 and highlighting God's presence among his people in the person of Jesus. This relates to identification in union with Christ as it shows God identifying with humanity by dwelling with them in Jesus.
7. Jesus referring to himself as the "bridegroom" uses marriage as a symbol to illustrate his intimate identification with his people. The implied bride, drawing from Old Testament imagery of Yahweh and Israel, is the church.
8. At the Transfiguration, God's voice identifies Jesus as his Son, the chosen one, superseding Moses and Elijah as the one to be listened to, emphasizing his unique role as covenant mediator. At the Last Supper, Jesus institutes the new covenant in his blood (Luke 22), establishing himself as the mediator of this new and ultimate covenant.
9. Participation in the story of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels means that believers share in the events that shape Jesus' life on earth, from his incarnation to his

resurrection. This implies taking part in the significance of his virginal conception, sinless life, atoning death, and triumphant resurrection.

10. The primary emphasis of Acts regarding salvation tends to be on the "what" of salvation (the events and outcomes) rather than the "how" (the specific mechanisms or doctrines). This influences its presentation of union with Christ by showing its foundational elements (like the indwelling Spirit and baptism in Jesus' name) without detailed doctrinal explanations.

### **Essay Format Questions:**

1. Discuss the three Old Testament "big pictures" of identification, incorporation, and participation, and analyze how each of these concepts foreshadows the New Testament doctrine of union with Christ.
2. Compare and contrast the presentation of the foundations for union with Christ in the Old Testament and the Synoptic Gospels. In what ways do the Synoptics build upon or clarify the foreshadowings found in the Old Testament?
3. Analyze the significance of Jesus being presented as both the Davidic King and the suffering servant in the Old Testament foreshadowings. How do these two roles find their fulfillment in the person and work of Christ as depicted in the Synoptic Gospels?
4. Evaluate the reasons why the Synoptic Gospels contain fewer explicit references to union with Christ compared to the Gospel of John and Paul's epistles. How do the Synoptics contribute to the foundation of this doctrine despite their narrative focus?
5. Examine the roles of the Holy Spirit and baptism as presented in the book of Acts in laying the groundwork for the understanding of union with Christ in the subsequent New Testament writings.



## Glossary of Key Terms:

- **Covenant Mediator:** An individual appointed by God to represent and facilitate the relationship between God and humanity within a specific covenant.
- **Emmanuel:** A Hebrew name meaning "God with us," used in Matthew's Gospel to refer to Jesus Christ, highlighting God's presence with humanity in his person.
- **Hypostatic Union:** The theological term used to describe the unique union of full deity and full humanity in the single person of Jesus Christ.
- **Incorporation:** The act of being included or integrated into a larger group or body, particularly in a covenantal context, referring to believers being included in Christ.
- **Participation:** The act of sharing in or taking part in something, referring to believers sharing in Christ's life, death, and resurrection.
- **Redemptive-Historical:** An approach to understanding Scripture that focuses on how God's plan of salvation unfolds throughout history, culminating in Jesus Christ.
- **Regeneration:** The act of God giving new spiritual life to a person, often associated with receiving a new heart and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.
- **Suffering Servant:** A figure prophesied in the Old Testament (especially Isaiah 53) who would suffer and die for the sins of others, understood by Christians to refer to Jesus Christ.
- **Synoptic Gospels:** The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, which share a similar perspective and content in their accounts of Jesus' life and ministry.
- **Union with Christ:** A central doctrine in Christian theology describing the believer's spiritual connection and identification with Jesus Christ in his life, death, resurrection, and ascension.

## 5. FAQs on Peterson, Christ's Saving Work, The Holy Spirit and Union with Christ, Session 7, Foundations Union OT & Synoptics, [Biblicalelearning.org](http://Biblicalelearning.org) (BeL)

### Frequently Asked Questions: Foundations of Union with Christ in the Old Testament and Synoptic Gospels

**1. What are the three main Old Testament foundations that foreshadow the New Testament doctrine of union with Christ?** The three primary Old Testament foundations are identification, incorporation, and participation. Identification refers to God's covenantal presence with his people, bestowing upon them an identity as his own. Incorporation describes how God forms a chosen people into a collective covenant community, relating to him through covenant mediators. Participation signifies the Old Testament people of God sharing in the covenantal story, anticipating the New Testament participation in Jesus' death and resurrection.

**2. How does the Old Testament concept of a coming Davidic King and suffering servant relate to union with Christ?** The Old Testament prophets foretold a future covenant mediator who would be both a Davidic King (Isaiah 9:6-7) and a suffering servant (Isaiah 53). This foreshadows Jesus Christ, who fulfills both roles. As the suffering servant, he takes the punishment for sin, allowing many to be accounted righteous (Isaiah 53:5-6, 11). The Apostle Peter explicitly connects this suffering servant imagery from Isaiah to Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:21, 24), highlighting Jesus' role as the ultimate covenant mediator through whom union with God is established.

**3. How do Old Testament passages like Ezekiel 36:24-28 and 37:11-14 anticipate the New Testament understanding of the Holy Spirit and union with Christ?** These passages speak of God's promise to put his Spirit within his people, giving them a new heart and enabling them to walk in his ways (Ezekiel 36:26-27, 37:14). While not explicitly stating "union with Christ," these prophecies foreshadow the New Testament reality where the Holy Spirit indwells believers, uniting them to Christ and providing the power for new life and obedience. Pentecost is seen as the fulfillment of these Old Testament promises on a corporate level.

**4. Why does the concept of "union with Christ" appear less explicitly in the Synoptic Gospels compared to other parts of the New Testament?** The Synoptic Gospels primarily focus on narrating the story of Jesus' identity and mission rather than explicitly explaining the implications of this story in doctrinal form. Additionally, much of their

narrative precedes Jesus' death and resurrection, events that are foundational to the doctrine of union with Christ. While the Synoptics lay the groundwork, they do so through the unfolding story rather than direct theological exposition.

**5. What three themes in the Synoptic Gospels lay the foundation for understanding union with Christ?** Similar to the Old Testament, the Synoptics establish foundations for union with Christ through the themes of identification, incorporation, and participation, all centered in the person and work of Jesus.

**6. How do the Synoptic Gospels portray Jesus as "Emmanuel" and the "bridegroom" to illustrate identification with his people?** Matthew's Gospel presents Jesus as Emmanuel, meaning "God with us" (Matthew 1:23, 28:20, 18:20), signifying God's presence among his people in the person of Jesus. The Synoptics also use the imagery of Jesus as the bridegroom (Matthew 9:14-15, Mark 2:18-20, Luke 5:33-35), drawing on Old Testament metaphors where Yahweh is the bridegroom and Israel is the bride. This imagery highlights Jesus' intimate identification with his people, who become his bride, the church.

**7. In what ways do the Synoptic Gospels present Jesus as the ultimate covenant mediator, leading to incorporation of believers?** The Synoptics portray Jesus as the new and greater Israel, fulfilling the roles of previous covenant mediators like Abraham, Moses, and David (Matthew 1:1-17, Luke 9:34-35). At the Last Supper, Jesus institutes the new covenant in his blood (Luke 22:19-20), establishing himself as the mediator of this new covenant. His messianic identity, clearly established in the Synoptics, implies his role as the representative of God's people, to whom believers are joined and by whom they are represented.

**8. How does the concept of "participation" in the story of Jesus appear in the Synoptic Gospels as a foundation for union with Christ?** The Synoptic Gospels narrate the key events of Jesus' life, from his incarnation to his resurrection. By telling this story, they depict the events in which believers, according to later New Testament teaching, participate. The Synoptics highlight Jesus' virgin conception, incarnation, sinless life, death, and resurrection, which are the historical realities that believers share in through their union with him. The call to follow Jesus as disciples also implies a participation in his life and mission.