

Dr. Robert A. Peterson, The Holy Spirit and Union with Christ, Session 8, Foundations Union, Acts & John

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 8, Foundations Union, Acts & John, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Robert Peterson's lecture explores the foundational elements leading to the doctrine of union with Christ, specifically within the Book of Acts. He argues that while Acts doesn't explicitly teach this union, it lays the groundwork through the identification of believers with Jesus, their incorporation into the church via the Holy Spirit, and their participation in Christ's story. **Peterson highlights parallels between Jesus' life and the early church, such as anointing by the Spirit, preaching, ministry, and persecution.** He further examines how Luke's use of Isaiah's suffering servant passages connects Jesus and the apostles in their mission. **Ultimately, Peterson concludes that Acts provides a redemptive-historical context for understanding union with Christ, which is more fully developed in John's Gospel and Paul's letters.**

2. 14 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Peterson, The Holy Spirit and Union with Christ, Session 8 – 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
_Session08.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Peterson, The Holy Spirit and Union with Christ, Session 8, Foundations Union, Acts & John

Briefing Document: Foundations for Union with Christ in Acts and Introduction to John's Gospel

Overview:

This briefing document summarizes Dr. Robert Peterson's lecture (Session 8) on the foundations for the doctrine of union with Christ, specifically focusing on the Book of Acts and providing an initial overview of the concept in John's Gospel. Peterson argues that while the Old Testament and Synoptic Gospels lay groundwork, and Acts enacts aspects related to union, it is in John's Gospel and Paul's letters that the doctrine is explicitly developed. This session concludes the survey of foundational texts and introduces the study of union with Christ in John.

Main Themes and Important Ideas/Facts:

I. Foundations for Union with Christ in the Book of Acts:

Peterson identifies three key aspects in Acts that anticipate or lay the groundwork for the doctrine of union with Christ:

- **Identification of the People of God with Jesus and the Pouring Out of the Spirit:** This involves the understanding that the people of God are now identified with Jesus himself, evidenced by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the church at Pentecost.
- **Incorporation of the People of God:** Pentecost and Christian baptism are central to this idea, signifying the inclusion of individuals into the church, the body of Christ.
- **Participation in Union with Christ:** This theme is explored through two main avenues in Acts:
- **Repetition of Jesus' Story in the Church's Life:** Luke, in his two-volume work (Luke-Acts), intentionally draws parallels between the life and ministry of Jesus and the early church. Peterson highlights a fourfold pattern present in both:
 1. **Anointing by the Spirit:** Jesus' anointing at his baptism (Luke 3:21-22) mirrors the church's anointing at Pentecost (Acts 2).

2. **A Sermon Explaining the Anointing:** Jesus' sermon in Nazareth (Luke 4:16-21, quoting Isaiah 61) finds a parallel in Peter's sermon at Pentecost (Acts 2, quoting Joel 2) and Stephen's sermon (Acts 7), which explains the significance of Jesus' exaltation and the outpouring of the Spirit. Peter states in Acts 2:33, *"Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing."*
3. **Effective Ministry in the Power of the Spirit:** Jesus' ministry (Luke 4:1, 4:14, 4:18, 10:21) is echoed in the powerful ministry of the apostles, often explicitly stated as being "filled with the Holy Spirit" (e.g., Peter in Acts 4:8, the believers in Acts 4:31: *"they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness."*).
4. **Opposition and Persecution by Jewish Leadership:** Jesus faced opposition (Luke 9:22, 22:1-2), and the early church similarly experienced persecution (Acts 4:17-18).
 - Furthermore, Peterson notes parallels between individual apostles (Peter, Stephen, and Paul) and Jesus, such as Stephen's dying words echoing Christ's passion and Paul's resolute journey to Jerusalem mirroring Jesus' resolve.
 - **Luke's Use of Isaiah's Suffering Servant Passages:** In Luke's Gospel, these passages are alluded to with reference to Jesus (e.g., Simeon's words in Luke 2:32, alluding to Isaiah 49:6). In Acts, these same passages are quoted with reference to the apostles and the church's mission. Paul and Barnabas quote Isaiah 49:6 in Acts 13:47: *"For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, 'I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.'"* This signifies the church extending Jesus' role as a "light to the Gentiles." Acts 1:8, Jesus' commission to his disciples, also alludes to the servant songs, particularly the phrase "to the end of the earth," linking the church's mission to Jesus'. Dennis Johnson notes the verbal identity of this phrase to the Septuagint reading of Isaiah 49:6.

II. Significance of Participation in Acts:

- Peterson emphasizes that this participation in Jesus' story and the suffering servant motif is not exactly union with Christ, nor does it diminish Christ's unique work.

- Instead, it provides a "picture of what it means to be united to Christ," particularly highlighting fellowship with his sufferings.
- Paul's later teaching in Romans 8:17, "*We are the true children of God... provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him,*" builds upon this foundation.

III. Acts as Redemptive-Historical Foundation:

- Acts documents the spread of the kingdom of God and the initial enactment of union with Christ through Pentecost, baptism, the reception of the Spirit, and participation in Jesus' story.
- While not explicitly teaching the doctrine of union, Acts "shows us what union looks like when acted out in the life of God's people."
- Paul's conversion on the Damascus Road is highlighted as a significant event illustrating identification with Christ, transforming him into "Christ's servant" and a "man in Christ."

IV. Introduction to Union with Christ in John's Gospel:

- Peterson states that while union with Christ is mentioned elsewhere in the New Testament (e.g., 1 John), John's Gospel and Paul's letters are the primary theological sources for this doctrine.
- John and Paul, though using different "idioms, very different idioms, different vocabulary, and different emphases," present overlapping teachings on union with Christ.
- Peterson outlines five key passages in John's Gospel that will be explored in subsequent lectures:
 1. John 6: Jesus' bread of life discourse.
 2. John 10: Mutual indwelling of the Father and the Son.
 3. John 14: Mutual indwelling of the Father, the Son, and believers.
 4. John 15: Jesus the vine, believers the branches.
 5. John 17: Mutual indwelling of the Father and the Son, and the Son and believers.

V. Initial Examination of John 6 (Jesus' Bread of Life Discourse):

- John 6 places union within the context of the incarnation and God's plan of salvation.
- The miracle of the multiplication of loaves and fish serves as a "sign" connected to Jesus' sermon, drawing parallels with the manna from heaven in the Old Testament (Exodus 16, Nehemiah 9:15, Psalms 78:24-25, 105:40).
- Jesus declares, *"it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my father gave you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world"* (John 6:32-33).
- The people misunderstand Jesus' spiritual meaning, a common literary device in John's Gospel.
- Jesus asserts his superiority over Old Testament figures and provisions, stating, *"I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst"* (John 6:35).
- Verses 36-47 provide a "panorama of the father's and son's roles in salvation," emphasizing the Father's drawing and the Son's role in resurrection. Jesus says, *"All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out"* (John 6:37). He further declares, *"Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life... I am the living bread that came down from heaven"* (John 6:47-51).

Conclusion of the Excerpt:

The excerpt concludes with a plan to further explore the five identified passages in John's Gospel to develop the understanding of union with Christ as presented by the Apostle John.

4. Study Guide: Peterson, The Holy Spirit and Union with Christ, Session 8, Foundations Union, Acts & John

Study Guide: Foundations for Union with Christ in Acts and Introduction to John's Gospel

Quiz

Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. According to Peterson, what are the three aspects in Acts that anticipate participation in union with Christ?
2. Describe one parallel that Luke draws between the story of Jesus in his Gospel and the story of the early church in Acts.
3. How does Stephen's death in Acts mirror an aspect of Jesus' passion?
4. In what way does Luke's use of Isaiah's suffering servant passages in Acts extend the mission of Jesus?
5. According to Peterson, is the doctrine of union with Christ explicitly taught in the Book of Acts? If not, what does Acts primarily focus on regarding this concept?
6. What key event in Acts provides the reality of union enacted in the life of the Church? Briefly explain its significance in this context.
7. How did Paul's conversion on the Damascus Road illustrate a foundational aspect related to union with Christ, even though the doctrine is not fully explained in Acts?
8. What are the three main themes Peterson identifies in Acts that anticipate union with Christ?
9. According to Peterson, who are the primary theologians of union with Christ in the New Testament?
10. What sign does Jesus perform in John 6 that sets the stage for his "bread of life" discourse, and what Old Testament event does this sign recall?

Quiz Answer Key

1. The three aspects in Acts that anticipate participation in union with Christ are the identification of the people of God with Jesus, the incorporation of the people of

God (especially through Pentecost and baptism), and participation in the repetition of Jesus' story and in Luke's use of Isaiah's suffering servant motif.

2. One parallel Luke draws is the anointing by the Spirit followed by a sermon explaining that anointing. Jesus is anointed by the Spirit at his baptism (Luke 3), followed by his sermon in Nazareth (Luke 4). Similarly, the church is anointed by the Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2), followed by Peter's sermon explaining this event.
3. Stephen's dying words mirror Jesus' passion in that Stephen prays, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," echoing Jesus' words, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." Additionally, Stephen's plea, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them," is similar to Jesus' prayer, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."
4. Luke's use of Isaiah's suffering servant passages extends Jesus' mission by showing the apostles and the church fulfilling the role of a "light to the Gentiles," as prophesied in Isaiah. While Simeon applies this to the infant Jesus in Luke, Paul and Barnabas in Acts see it as a command for their missionary work, thus extending the reach of salvation.
5. No, the doctrine of union with Christ is not explicitly taught in Acts. Instead, Acts primarily documents the spread of the kingdom of God and illustrates what union looks like when acted out in the life of God's people through events like Pentecost and the transformation of believers.
6. Pentecost provides the reality of union enacted in the life of the Church. At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit is poured out on the believers, incorporating them into the body of Christ and empowering them for mission, which serves as a foundational experience for understanding union.
7. Paul's conversion on the Damascus Road illustrated identification with Christ. In this encounter, Jesus directly confronts Paul, identifying himself with the persecuted church. This event forever marked Paul as Christ's servant and a man "in Christ," laying a foundation for understanding the personal aspect of union.
8. The three main themes Peterson identifies in Acts that anticipate union with Christ are identification (the Church with Jesus' story, individuals in baptism), incorporation (through Pentecost and reception of the Spirit), and participation (in Jesus' story and his mission as seen in the suffering servant motif).
9. According to Peterson, the primary theologians of union with Christ in the New Testament are John and Paul. While other New Testament texts touch on the

concept, John's Gospel and Paul's letters offer the most extensive theological development of this doctrine.

10. The sign Jesus performs is the multiplication of the loaves and fish, feeding a large crowd. This sign recalls the Old Testament event of God feeding the Israelites with manna in the wilderness (Exodus 16), providing a point of comparison for Jesus' claim to be the true bread from heaven.

Essay Format Questions

1. Discuss how the parallels between the life of Jesus in Luke's Gospel and the early church in Acts, as outlined by Peterson, lay a foundational understanding for the concept of believers' participation in union with Christ as later developed by Paul.
2. Analyze Luke's use of Isaiah's suffering servant motif in both his Gospel and the Book of Acts. How does this motif connect Jesus' ministry with the mission of the apostles and the early church, and what implications does this have for understanding union with Christ?
3. Evaluate the significance of Pentecost and Christian baptism as presented in Acts in relation to the foundational aspects of incorporation and identification that precede the explicit teaching of union with Christ in other New Testament books.
4. Explore the argument that while Acts does not explicitly teach the doctrine of union with Christ, it provides essential redemptive-historical context and practical illustrations that are crucial for understanding its later development in the writings of John and Paul.
5. Compare and contrast the three foundational aspects (identification, incorporation, and participation) discussed by Peterson in the context of Acts. How do these aspects collectively contribute to a preliminary understanding of what it means to be related to Christ before a more developed theology of union is presented?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Anointing by the Spirit:** The act of being consecrated or empowered by the Holy Spirit for a specific purpose or role, as seen in Jesus' baptism and the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost.
- **Christophany:** A visible manifestation or appearance of Christ after his ascension. Paul's encounter on the Damascus Road is an example.
- **Incorporation:** The act of being made part of a larger body or group. In the context of Acts, it refers to believers being made part of the body of Christ through the Holy Spirit, particularly after Pentecost.
- **Identification:** The act of associating or aligning oneself with someone or something. In Acts, this is seen in the church identifying with Jesus' story and individual believers identifying with him through baptism.
- **Participation:** The act of sharing in or taking part in something. In Acts, this refers to the church participating in the repetition of Jesus' story and in the mission of the suffering servant.
- **Redemptive-Historical:** An approach to understanding Scripture that focuses on how God's plan of salvation unfolds throughout history, with key events building upon one another.
- **Suffering Servant Motif:** A theme found in the book of Isaiah (especially Isaiah 52:13-53:12) describing a figure who suffers for the sake of others. Luke applies this to Jesus, and Acts extends aspects of it to the apostles and the church.
- **Synoptic Gospels:** The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, which share a similar perspective and content.
- **Union with Christ:** A central theological concept, particularly in the writings of Paul and John, describing the believer's deep and multifaceted relationship with Jesus Christ, involving spiritual connection, identification, and participation in his life, death, and resurrection.
- **Pentecost:** The event recorded in Acts 2 where the Holy Spirit was poured out on the disciples, marking the birth of the New Testament church and empowering believers.

5. FAQs on Peterson, Christ's Saving Work, The Holy Spirit and Union with Christ, Session 8, Foundations Union, Acts & John, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions: Foundations for Union with Christ in Acts and John's Gospel

1. How does the Book of Acts lay a foundation for understanding union with Christ?

The Book of Acts, while not explicitly teaching the doctrine of union with Christ, lays a redemptive-historical foundation through several key aspects. First, it demonstrates an identification of the people of God with Jesus himself and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the church at Pentecost. Second, it shows the incorporation of believers into the body of Christ through Pentecost and Christian baptism. Finally, Acts highlights the participation of believers and the early church in the story of Jesus, evidenced by the repetition of Jesus' life patterns in the church's experience and Luke's use of Isaiah's suffering servant motif in relation to both Jesus and the apostles. These themes of identification, incorporation, and participation serve as antecedents to the fuller exposition of union with Christ found in John's Gospel and Paul's letters.

2. What parallels does Luke draw between the life of Jesus and the life of the early church in Acts?

Luke, as the author of both the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts, intentionally draws parallels between the life of Jesus and the early church. This pattern includes four main elements: (1) anointing by the Holy Spirit (Jesus at his baptism, the church at Pentecost), (2) a sermon explaining the anointing (Jesus' sermon in Nazareth, Peter's sermon at Pentecost and Stephen's later), (3) effective ministry in the power of the Spirit (evident throughout Jesus' ministry and the actions of the apostles), and (4) opposition and persecution from Jewish leadership (experienced by both Jesus and the early church). These structural and thematic parallels demonstrate how the early church's story is, in many ways, a continuation and repetition of Jesus' own ministry and experiences.

3. How does the concept of "participation" contribute to the foundation for union with Christ in Acts?

The concept of "participation" in Acts has two main expressions. First, the early church participates in the repetition of Jesus' story in its own life, reflecting aspects of his anointing, teaching, ministry, suffering, and even his resolved journey to Jerusalem. This suggests a fellowship with Christ, particularly in his sufferings. Second, there is a participation in Luke's use of Isaiah's suffering servant passages. Just as Jesus is presented as the suffering servant in Luke's Gospel, the apostles in Acts take on aspects of this role as God's messengers, extending his mission to the Gentiles. This participation, while not identical to union with Christ, provides a picture of what it means to be connected to and involved in Christ's story and mission.

4. How does Paul's conversion in Acts foreshadow the concept of union with Christ?

Paul's dramatic conversion on the road to Damascus is a pivotal event that illustrates a profound identification with Christ. Encountering the risen Jesus transformed Paul from a persecutor of the church to its greatest proponent. This experience fundamentally changed his identity, marking him forever as Christ's servant or slave. While Acts doesn't explicitly define union with Christ, Paul's conversion exemplifies a deep personal connection and identification with Jesus, foreshadowing the more developed theological understanding of being "in Christ" found in his letters.

5. According to John's Gospel, how does Jesus describe himself as the "bread of life" and how does this relate to union with him?

In John 6, Jesus' "bread of life" discourse portrays him as the true bread from heaven, superseding the manna given in the Old Testament. He declares, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst" (John 6:35). This metaphor highlights that just as physical bread sustains life, Jesus, the incarnate Son of God, spiritually nourishes and satisfies every believer. Coming to him and believing in him are presented as essential for receiving this spiritual sustenance and eternal life, suggesting a vital and intimate connection that forms a basis for the concept of union.

6. What is the significance of "mutual indwelling" in John's Gospel concerning the Father, the Son, and believers?

John's Gospel emphasizes the concept of "mutual indwelling" as a key aspect of the relationship between the Father, the Son, and believers. Several passages (John 10, 14, 17) highlight that the Father and the Son are in each other. Furthermore, Jesus promises that believers who love him and keep his commandments will experience the Father and the Son coming to them and making their home with them through the Holy Spirit (John 14:23). This mutual indwelling signifies a deep, intimate, and abiding union between God and those who believe in Jesus.

7. How does the analogy of "the vine and the branches" in John 15 illustrate union with Christ?

In John 15, Jesus uses the powerful analogy of the vine and the branches to describe the relationship between himself and his followers. He declares, "I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him will bear much fruit; for apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). This imagery underscores the vital and inseparable connection between Christ and believers. Just as branches draw life and nourishment from the vine, believers depend entirely on Christ for spiritual life, strength, and fruitfulness. Abiding in Christ, therefore, is essential for a living and productive union.

8. What are some of the different ways John's Gospel and Paul's letters present the concept of union with Christ?

While both John's Gospel and Paul's letters are central to the theology of union with Christ, they present it with different idioms, vocabulary, and emphases. John's Gospel frequently uses the language of mutual indwelling and metaphors like the bread of life and the vine and branches to illustrate this union as a deep, personal, and life-giving relationship. Paul's letters, on the other hand, often speak of believers being "in Christ," having died and been raised with him, and being part of his body, emphasizing a more corporate and transformative aspect of union that affects the believer's identity and standing before God. Despite these differences in expression, both John and Paul articulate a profound and essential spiritual connection between believers and Jesus Christ.