

Dr. Robert A. Peterson, Revelation & Holy Scripture, Session 3, Knowing God and the Biblical Story Resources from NotebookLM

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

1. Abstract of Peterson, Revelation & Holy Scripture, Session 3, Knowing God and the Biblical Story, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This source presents a lecture by Dr. Robert A. Peterson on Revelation and Scripture, specifically session three which focuses on **knowing God through the biblical narrative and its implications for Christian theology**. Peterson outlines the **biblical story in four movements: creation, fall, redemption, and consummation**, explaining how each informs our understanding of God. The lecture further explores how these theological themes, such as **God's nature, revelation, creation, humanity, sin, Christ, salvation, the Holy Spirit, the church, and the future**, shape the content and pursuit of theology. Peterson emphasizes the **importance of Scripture as the primary means of knowing God** and how the entirety of the biblical story provides a framework for theological understanding.

2. 20 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Peterson, Revelation & Holy Scripture, Session 3 – 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 → Revelation & Scripture).



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3. Briefing Document: Peterson, Revelation & Holy Scripture, Session 3, Knowing God and the Biblical Story

Briefing Document: Knowing God and the Biblical Story - Dr. Robert A. Peterson

Subject: Review of Main Themes and Important Ideas from Dr. Robert A. Peterson's Session 3 on Revelation and Scripture

Overview:

This briefing document summarizes the key themes and important ideas presented by Dr. Robert A. Peterson in Session 3 of his teaching on Revelation and Holy Scripture, titled "Knowing God and the Biblical Story and Knowing God and our Theology." This session focuses on how the overarching biblical narrative, encompassing creation, fall, redemption, and consummation, provides the framework for understanding God and shapes our Christian theology. Dr. Peterson draws heavily on Christopher Morgan's *Christian Theology, Knowing God and the Biblical Story* and incorporates insights from various biblical scholars.

Main Themes and Important Ideas:

1. The Biblical Story as a Foundation:

- Dr. Peterson emphasizes the importance of understanding God through the lens of the biblical story: "We want to run thinking about the knowledge of God through the biblical episodes, if you will, of creation, fall, redemption, and consummation."
- This four-part narrative provides the structure for both understanding God's actions and for organizing theological doctrines.

2. Creation: God's Power, Majesty, and Goodness:

- God is presented as the eternal, self-existent Creator who brought the universe into being *ex nihilo* (out of nothing).
- The creation account in Genesis 1 highlights God's "sublimity, power, majesty, and wisdom" (quoting Bruce Waltke).
- God is distinct from His creation, transcendent and sovereign, exercising His will through His word.
- He is also personal, actively involved in every detail of creation, culminating in the personal creation of humanity in His image.

- Humanity's creation in God's image grants us "an astounding dignity, and there is implanted within us a profound capacity for knowing God intimately" (quoting D.A. Carson).
- The inherent goodness of creation, repeatedly affirmed ("and God saw that it was good"), refutes any fundamental dualism between good spirit and bad matter.
- God's rest on the seventh day signifies His joy, satisfaction, and the sanctification of that day. The Garden of Eden is presented as a "temple garden" (quoting Waltke), highlighting God's presence with humanity.

3. The Fall: Human Rebellion and its Devastating Consequences:

- Adam and Eve's disobedience to God's command in Genesis 3, instigated by a tempter who questioned God's character, is the central act of the fall.
- The sequence "she saw, she took, she ate, and she gave, culminating in he ate" (referencing Wenham) underscores the rapid progression of sin.
- The consequences of the fall are profound and multifaceted, bringing "dark new realities" that contrast sharply with the tempter's promises.
- These consequences include:
 - Shame and guilt ("They know they are nude, and they hide among the trees.").
 - Estrangement from God ("They're afraid of God and how he might respond").
 - Alienation from each other (blame-shifting).
 - Pain and sorrow (in childbirth and toil).
 - Banishment from Eden and God's presence.
 - Spiritual death and the beginning of physical decay.
- Sin's impact extends to all of humanity, disrupting relationships with God, self, others, and creation.

4. Redemption: God's Gracious Restoration Project:

- Despite humanity's "cosmic treason," God initiates a "restoration project" to restore humanity as full image-bearers.
- This begins with God's covenant with Abraham, promising land, a great nation, and blessing to all peoples.

- The Old Testament narrative recounts God's dealings with Israel, including the Exodus, the giving of the Law, the establishment of the kingdom, and the subsequent cycles of rebellion, judgment, and restoration.
- Prophetic promises foretell a deliverer, culminating in the coming of Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah.
- Jesus' identity as fully God and fully human is highlighted. His life, teachings, miracles, death, and resurrection are central to God's redemptive plan.
- Jesus' death on the cross, though a seemingly evil act, is part of God's eternal plan to save sinners, acting as a "substitute, victor, sacrifice, second Adam, redeemer, and peacemaker."
- The resurrection confirms Jesus' identity, defeats sin and death, and offers new life to believers.
- The Great Commission directs disciples to spread the gospel to all nations, fulfilling God's promise to Abraham.
- The Holy Spirit's descent at Pentecost forms the church as the New Testament people of God, empowered to witness to Christ.
- The early church's practices (apostles' teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, prayer, evangelism, discipleship, ministry, worship) serve as a model.
- Salvation is understood as planned by the Father, accomplished by the Son, and applied by the Spirit, resulting in believers being chosen, called, given new life, forgiven, declared righteous, adopted, and made holy.

5. Consummation: The Future Reign of Christ and Final Restoration:

- Jesus will return to reign as King, bringing justice, peace, delight, and victory.
- The kingdom of God is both a present reality (inaugurated by Jesus' ministry and expanded through the church) and a future promise tied to His second coming.
- Christ will judge the world, ushering believers into the final stage of the kingdom and banishing unbelievers to hell.
- Revelation 20-22 depicts the consummation, paralleling Genesis 1-2: a new heaven and a new earth replacing the old.
- This final state will be characterized by God's dwelling with His people, the consummation of His victory, final judgment, the vanquishing of sin, prevailing

justice, dominating holiness, unobstructed glory, and the full realization of the kingdom.

- Satan and demons will be tormented in the lake of fire forever. Unbelievers, those whose names are not in the Book of Life, will also be consigned to hell.
- The new heavens and new earth will be a perfect temple where God's people rightly bear His image, serve Him, reign with Him, and worship Him directly.

6. Knowing God and Our Theology:

- The biblical story shapes both the order and content of Christian theology. The four-part narrative (creation, fall, redemption, consummation) provides the framework for theological topics.
- Biblical truths from the story inform and clarify our approach to theology.
- Key attributes of God (infinity, graciousness, truthfulness, personal nature, holiness, love, glory) provide a compass for our theology.
- God's self-revelation, both general (through creation and the moral law) and special (through historical actions, divine speech, His covenant people, and most fully in Jesus Christ and Holy Scripture), is the foundation for knowing Him and doing theology.
- Theology begins with the fear of the Lord and requires dependence on God's self-revelation in the authoritative Scriptures.
- Creation, humanity (as image-bearers with limitations due to being creatures), and sin (which distorts our knowledge) all function as components that influence our theology.
- Christ, as the fullest revelation of God, the truth, the light, and the Lord, is central to our theological understanding. "In Christ...are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (quoting Colossians 2:3).
- Theology is covenantal and intensely personal, focusing on our relationship with God through salvation in Christ.
- The Holy Spirit is essential for understanding and applying theology, inspiring Scripture, providing insight, and empowering the church.
- The church, as God's redeemed people, is marked by truth and lives in community under the Word, where theology is pursued collectively.

- The future hope in God's ultimate purposes guides our theology, as we look forward to Christ's return, triumph, and the establishment of cosmic justice and peace.

Looking Ahead:

Dr. Peterson indicates that the next session will focus on the sources of theology, including tradition, reason, experience, and supremely, Holy Scripture.

Conclusion:

This session lays a crucial foundation by demonstrating how the grand narrative of the Bible – from creation to consummation – is essential for truly knowing God and for constructing a robust Christian theology. Dr. Peterson emphasizes that understanding God's actions within this story, from His powerful creation to His gracious redemption and ultimate restoration, is paramount for shaping our faith, hope, love, and daily lives.

4. Study Guide: Peterson, Revelation & Holy Scripture, Session 3, Knowing God and the Biblical Story

Knowing God and the Biblical Story: A Study Guide

Quiz

1. Describe God's role as the chief character in the creation account in Genesis 1. What does this reveal about His nature and relationship to creation?
2. Explain the significance of humans being created in God's image. According to Carson, what profound capacity does this bestow upon humanity?
3. Summarize the key events and consequences of the Fall as described in Genesis 3. How did this event impact humanity's relationship with God, each other, and creation?
4. What is the central theme of God's redemptive actions in the Old Testament, beginning with Abraham? Provide a couple of specific examples of God's covenantal promises.
5. Explain the significance of Jesus' death and resurrection within the overarching biblical story of redemption. What key roles did Jesus fulfill in saving sinners?
6. Describe the role and function of the Holy Spirit in the early church, as highlighted in the book of Acts. What are some of the key activities the early church engaged in?
7. According to the lecture, how is the kingdom of God both a present reality and a future promise? What events mark its inauguration and its future fullness?
8. Summarize the key characteristics of the new heavens and new earth as described in Revelation 20-22. How does this consummation relate to the initial creation?
9. Explain how the biblical story (creation, fall, redemption, consummation) frames the order and topics of Christian theology. Provide a couple of examples.
10. How does God's self-revelation guide our theological pursuits? Describe at least three characteristics of God's self-revelation discussed in the lecture.

Answer Key

1. As the chief character in Genesis 1, God actively creates, speaks, sees, separates, names, makes, appoints, blesses, finishes, makes holy, and rests. This reveals His power, majesty, wisdom, and sovereignty as the transcendent Creator who is distinct from His creation and upon whom creation depends.
2. Being created in God's image distinguishes humans from the rest of creation and signifies that God is distinct from us. According to D.A. Carson, this bestows upon us an astounding dignity and a profound capacity for knowing God intimately.
3. The Fall occurred when Adam and Eve disobeyed God's command not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, influenced by the tempter. The consequences included immediate feelings of shame, estrangement from God and each other, the introduction of pain and sorrow, and banishment from the Garden of Eden, leading to spiritual and eventual physical death for them and their descendants.
4. The central theme of God's redemptive actions in the Old Testament is the initiation of a restoration project for humanity, beginning with a covenant with Abraham. Examples include God promising Abraham land, to make him a great nation, and to bless all peoples through him (Genesis 12:1-3), and later establishing a covenant with the nation of Israel through Moses.
5. Jesus' death on the cross, part of God's eternal plan, served as a substitutionary sacrifice for sinners. His resurrection three days later confirmed His identity, defeated sin and death, and offers new life and future resurrection for believers.
6. On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit formed the church and empowered it to bear witness to Christ among the nations. The early church devoted itself to the apostles' teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, prayer, evangelism, discipleship, ministry, and worship.
7. The kingdom of God is a present reality inaugurated during Jesus' public ministry through His teachings, miracles, and casting out of demons, and expanding through the apostles' preaching after His ascension. Its future promise lies in Christ's return when He will fully establish His reign, judge the world, and invite believers into its final stage.
8. The new heavens and new earth will be characterized by God's personal presence with His covenant people, the absence of pain and death, and the renewal of all things. This consummation echoes the initial goodness of creation and the

dwelling of God with humanity in the Garden, but in a perfected and eternal state.

9. The biblical story provides a chronological framework for theological topics, with creation addressing God as Creator, the Fall explaining sin and its consequences, redemption focusing on Christ's saving work, and consummation looking at the future hope. For example, the doctrine of humanity is understood in light of creation (image of God) and the fall (sinful nature).
10. God's self-revelation is gracious (freely initiated), truthful (faithfully representing God), and a unity (coherent despite various forms). It is also personal (communicating God and His ways), propositional (making assertions of truth), analogical (using human contexts), partial (limited to finite understanding), historical (in space and time), and progressive (expanding over time in Scripture). This revelation is the foundation for and guide of our theological understanding.

Essay Format Questions

1. Discuss the interconnectedness of creation, fall, redemption, and consummation as the foundational narrative for understanding both God's character and humanity's place in the world.
2. Analyze the multifaceted role of Jesus Christ as presented in the lecture, highlighting how His life, death, and resurrection address the consequences of the Fall and usher in redemption.
3. Evaluate the significance of both general and special revelation in knowing God and developing a comprehensive Christian theology. How do they complement and differ from each other?
4. Explore the implications of humanity being created in God's image for our understanding of human dignity, purpose, and the impact of sin on these aspects.
5. Describe the role of the Holy Spirit in the process of salvation and in the ongoing life and growth of the church, as outlined in the lecture.

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Consummation:** The final fulfillment of God's redemptive plan, marked by Christ's return, the establishment of the new heavens and new earth, and the final judgment.
- **Covenant:** A binding agreement between God and humanity, characterized by promises and obligations. Examples include the covenants with Abraham, Moses, and the new covenant in Christ.
- **Creation:** God's act of bringing the universe and everything in it into existence out of nothing (ex nihilo).
- **Fall:** The event in Genesis 3 where Adam and Eve disobeyed God's command, resulting in sin entering the world and affecting humanity's relationship with God, each other, and creation.
- **General Revelation:** God's self-disclosure through creation and the moral law written on human hearts, accessible to all people at all times.
- **Image of God:** The unique way in which humanity reflects God's character, enabling us to relate to Him and fulfill His purposes.
- **Kingdom of God:** God's reign and rule over His people and creation, both as a present reality in Christ and a future hope at His return.
- **Redemption:** God's act of saving humanity from sin and its consequences through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.
- **Self-Revelation:** God's act of making Himself known to humanity through various means, including creation, historical actions, divine speech, Jesus Christ, and Scripture.
- **Special Revelation:** God's specific self-disclosure to particular people at particular times, most notably through the inspired Scriptures and ultimately in Jesus Christ.
- **Theology:** The study of God and religious beliefs. In this context, Christian theology seeks to understand God and His relationship with the world based on the biblical story and divine revelation.
- **Transcendent:** Existing apart from and not subject to the limitations of the material universe or the physical world. Used to describe God's nature as being above and beyond His creation.

5. FAQs on Peterson, Revelation & Holy Scripture, Session 3, Knowing God and the Biblical Story, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions: Knowing God and the Biblical Story

1. How does the creation account in Genesis reveal God's nature and establish a foundational worldview?

The creation account in Genesis portrays God as the eternal, self-existent Creator, who existed before matter, space, or time. It emphasizes His sublimity, power, majesty, and wisdom as He brings the universe into being by His word. God is presented as distinct from His creation, transcendent and sovereign, personally involved in every detail, and ultimately good. This account lays the foundation for a worldview where God is the ultimate authority, and creation is dependent on and subject to Him, highlighting the inherent goodness of the material world and humanity's unique place as beings created in God's image with the capacity for intimate knowledge of Him.

2. What were the immediate and long-term consequences of the fall of humanity as described in Genesis?

The immediate consequences of Adam and Eve's disobedience included a sense of shame, estrangement from God (leading to fear and hiding), alienation from each other (blame-shifting), and the introduction of pain and sorrow into their lives, such as increased pain in childbirth for the woman and toilsome work for the man. More profoundly, they experienced spiritual death and the beginning of physical decay, ultimately leading to death. The long-term consequences extended to their descendants, introducing sin, disruption, and alienation into all human relationships with God, themselves, one another, and creation.

3. How does the Old Testament narrative, from Abraham to the prophets, illustrate God's redemptive plan after the fall?

Despite humanity's rebellion, God initiated a restoration project, beginning with His covenant with Abraham, promising land, a great nation, and blessings for all peoples. This covenant line continued through Isaac and Jacob (Israel), leading to the formation of the twelve tribes. God's redemptive actions included the Exodus from Egypt, the giving of the Law, the promise of the Promised Land, and His continued dealings with Israel through judges and kings. Even in times of rebellion and judgment (captivity in Assyria and Babylon), God sent prophets to call His people to repentance and promised

a future deliverer and restoration, demonstrating His persistent faithfulness and commitment to His redemptive purposes.

4. What is the significance of Jesus Christ in the biblical story of redemption?

Jesus Christ is presented as the promised Messiah, the Son of God who became fully human while remaining fully divine. He fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies, inaugurated the kingdom of God through His teaching, miracles, and defeat of demonic forces, and ultimately offered Himself as a sinless sacrifice on the cross. His death was part of God's eternal plan to save sinners, acting as a substitute, victor, sacrifice, redeemer, and peacemaker. His resurrection confirmed His identity, defeated sin and death, and offers new life to believers, marking the pivotal point in God's redemptive work.

5. How does the early church, as described in Acts, continue and expand Christ's redemptive work?

Following Jesus' ascension and the sending of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the early church became the New Testament people of God, empowered to spread the gospel to all nations. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayer. The church actively engaged in evangelism, discipleship, fellowship, ministry, and worship, leading to growth and the planting of new churches. The early church served as a living witness to Christ, teaching sound doctrine, correcting error, and living in love, unity, holiness, and truth, thus continuing the mission of redemption.

6. What does the biblical narrative reveal about the ultimate consummation of God's plan?

The biblical story culminates with the return of Jesus Christ as King, bringing justice, peace, and victory. This involves the judgment of the world, the ushering in of the fullness of God's kingdom for believers, and the banishment of unbelievers and Satan to eternal punishment. The consummation includes the creation of a new heaven and a new earth, where God will dwell with His covenant people in perfect harmony. Sin, death, and suffering will be no more, God's glory will be fully revealed, and His eternal plan of cosmic reconciliation in Christ will be fully realized.

7. How does the overarching biblical story (creation, fall, redemption, consummation) shape the content and order of Christian theology?

The biblical story provides the framework for understanding and organizing the major themes of Christian theology. The doctrines of God, creation, humanity, sin, Jesus and His saving work, the Holy Spirit's application of salvation, the church, and the future are all understood and interpreted within the context of this narrative arc. The order of these theological topics often follows the sequence of the biblical story, and the content of each doctrine is informed by its place and significance within God's unfolding plan from creation to consummation.

8. According to the source, what is the role of God's self-revelation, particularly through Scripture, in informing our theology and knowledge of Him?

The source emphasizes that all true knowledge of God flows from His gracious self-revelation. God reveals Himself through creation, humanity, historical actions, divine speech, His covenant people, and most fully through Jesus Christ and Holy Scripture. Scripture is considered the most accessible and authoritative form of God's self-revelation, accurately recording and interpreting His character and actions. Theology, therefore, begins with a posture of dependence on this revelation, particularly the truthful and authoritative Scriptures, as the primary means by which we can know God, understand His ways, and develop sound doctrine.