

THE GOSPEL OF BEING: CONFRONTING THE MODERN INTERPRETATION OF THE
GOSPELS PRESENTED BY JORDAN PETERSON

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ABSTRACT

Jordan Peterson, starting in 2024, produced a docuseries called *The Gospels* based on the four gospels. As a public intellectual whose influence reaches millions, Peterson's psychological and philosophical engagement with Scripture shapes how many viewers understand Christ, salvation, and the Christian life. While he approaches the biblical text with seriousness and often articulates moral insights, his method ultimately reframes the gospel into what this paper calls the "gospel of being." This interpretive pattern elevates Jesus primarily as an archetypal human, moral exemplar, and embodiment of order, rather than as the divine Savior who accomplishes redemption for sinners.

Evaluated through Confessional Lutheran hermeneutics, this study demonstrates how Peterson's hermeneutic—rooted in psychology, philosophy, and broad allegorization—redefines key Christian doctrines. His Christology presents Jesus as the supreme pattern of human potential rather than the God-man who atones for sin. His soteriology shifts salvation from a focus on God's gracious act in Christ to a human self-orientation toward the Logos through moral living. His understanding of sanctification merges civic righteousness with spiritual transformation, blurring the necessary distinction between justification and good works. Despite these concerns, Peterson's cultural impact makes engagement with his work essential for pastors and laypeople alike. This thesis, therefore, not only critiques Peterson's theological framework but also equips Christians to respond with clarity, charity, and biblical fidelity.

THE GOSPEL OF BEING

The gospel message is constantly under attack by the devil, the world, and our sinful nature. As we analyze the devil's temptations and accusations, we see clearly the way he tries to trick us into taking our focus from Jesus Christ as our Savior and directing our focus on something else. Satan uses various means to accomplish his treacherous purposes. Sometimes, he persecutes the Christian church through government regulations that oppress Christianity and the work of the church to spread the gospel. Sometimes he infiltrates the church with heretical teachings. Sometimes he leads people to deny basic teachings of the Bible and to promote their erroneous ideas through culture and false religions.

The devil never tires in his quest to mount attacks against God and his Church. This is nothing new. Since the Fall, the devil has been at this work. It is also true that there is nothing new under the sun. The lies of the devil are repackaged and repurposed. Satan exemplifies his lies by his attempts to redirect our focus from Jesus as our Savior from sin to a Jesus who is merely a good example and moral leader for us to follow. While a plethora of people and organizations have adopted this lie, we need to address one that is particularly influential today.

Who Teaches the Gospel of Being?

He pops up on several social media platforms. A person will hear him speak on news networks as a guest speaker on social issues or challenges facing our society. He is a popular voice and

advocate for men to be leaders and to act in a manner that aligns with traditional expectations of masculinity, as opposed to the more modern trends and liberal philosophies on the roles of men and women. He speaks with both compassion and authority. You would be hard-pressed to meet someone under thirty years old who is active in the realm of politics and social issues who hasn't heard of him. That "him" is Dr. Jordan B. Peterson.

Jordan Peterson is a clinical psychologist who has taught at the University of Toronto and continues this practice to this day. In the 2010s, as gender identity issues gained prominence, some governments began enacting laws on this civil issue. America legalized gay marriage in 2015 on a nationwide scale. The Canadian government introduced Bill C-16 in 2017, which amended the Canadian Human Rights Act to address the demands of the LGBTQ+ community regarding pronoun usage and gender-affirming care. Peterson opposed the language and legitimacy of gender-affirming care.¹ Eventually, his insistence on gender issues led him to resign from his tenured professorship at the University of Toronto in 2021.²

While teaching at the University of Toronto, Peterson began speaking more about religion and Christianity. In 2017, he began a series of lectures on Genesis titled "*The Psychological Significance of the Biblical Stories*." The series garnered worldwide attention, achieving great success and earning the love of the University of Toronto students. Peterson had such success with these lectures that he and other presenters wanted to continue this work of biblical discussions. One presenter, Dr. Douglas Hedley, a professor at Cambridge University, wanted to continue this work at that prominent university. However, Cambridge University

1. "About – Jordan Peterson," n.d. <https://www.jordanbpeterson.com/about/>.

2. Several issues are at play here. Jordan was not a fan of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives that were occurring, along with the increasing liberalism in the academic world. He was also becoming a more prominent social media influencer by this time. With his growing influence, this move to resign allowed him more time to do the work that interested him.

opposed this. Despite the attention that Peterson and his friends were gaining, the university deemed it against their policy. They didn't want to have their school associated with biblical lectures in preference to other religions. To prevent this, they banned any discussion of religion in a formal setting. This led Peterson to take a minor step back from his Bible based lectures and discussions.

Since Peterson resigned from teaching, he has continued to expand his social media influence and joined the podcast and news network *The Daily Wire*.³ While at *The Daily Wire*, he operates a podcast and contributes to their platform with various documentaries and series. Peterson also continues his clinical work with patients on a weekly basis. He continues to speak to colleges and podcasters on gender issues, highlighting the need for men to step up in society and reclaim their role as head of the household.⁴

Beginning in 2022, in collaboration with *The Daily Wire*, Peterson produced a 17-part series based on the book of Exodus. That same year, Peterson's movie *Logos and Literacy* premiered, which examined the history of the Bible and its relevance in the world. Continuing his trend of Bible-based talks, Peterson produced a 2024 docuseries titled *Foundations of the West*. Much like *Logos and Literacy*, this series follows Peterson and Ben Shapiro as they journey around the Mediterranean to explore the spread of Christianity in the world, particularly in the Greco-Roman world. They visit many famous archaeological sites and monumental places where Western culture laid its foundations.

3. *The Daily Wire* is a conservative news network that was founded in 2015 by Ben Shapiro and Jeremy Boering. A majority of their content is available on all major media platforms, while some material is found exclusively on their website. Some other notable names associated with this news company include Michael Knowles, Andrew Klavan, and Matt Walsh.

4. Jordan Peterson's YouTube channel, as well as his personal website and *The Daily Wire*, host much of his content. You can also search for highlights or clips about him and find many news segments and lectures that he has given.

Peterson's latest Bible-based series⁵, based on the four gospels of the New Testament—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—premiered from December 2024 through January 2025. This is his New Testament debut in terms of Bible books. While *Foundations of the West* discusses the New Testament world, it is not based on a specific book of the Bible. In the same manner as his Exodus series, Peterson hosts this Bible series on the Gospels in a roundtable format where he invites guests to a panel discussion. The panelists share commentary, ask questions, and discuss differences of opinion on doctrine or questions raised based on the text. The first episode of the series is available on YouTube, while the entirety of the remaining episodes are found exclusively at dailywire.com with a DailyWire+ subscription.

The Gospels

The Gospels features Jordan Peterson with eight other panelists as they discuss the four gospels. This 10-episode series covers a majority of the four gospels, though not an entire readthrough.⁶ Generally, each episode of the series begins with a cutscene from one of the panelists, which sets the stage for the theme of the episode. A reading from Scripture starts the discussion from the panelists. Most of the time, Jordan Peterson's psychological and philosophical insights and

5. Peterson continually creates new content for the Daily Wire and his brand, known as "Peterson Academy." As of January 11, 2026, Peterson released a new Bible lecture class on "The Sermon on the Mount." Despite his health complications in the last months of 2025, which placed him in the ICU for a month, his team of workers, alongside his daughter, Mikhaila Fuller (Peterson), continue to release new classes.

6. Episode 1: Birth—Youth—Baptism. Episode 2: The Beginning of the Ministry. Episode 3: Miracles. Episode 4: The Sermon on the Mount. Episode 5: Parables. Episode 6: The Ministry Continues. Episode 7: Conflict with Authority. Episode 8: Holy Week and The Last Supper. Episode 9: Betrayal and Trial. Episode 10: Crucifixion and Resurrection.

opinions on the biblical texts arouse discussion. After Peterson's interpretation, there are questions and answers about the Scripture text from the remaining panelists.⁷

The eight other panelists come from various religious backgrounds. Bishop Robert Barron is a Roman Catholic Bishop of the Diocese of Winona-Rochester and founder of Word on Fire Catholic Ministries. Konstantin Kisin, who fills in for Bishop Barron after he must excuse himself from the series after episode six, is a satirist, author, and co-host of the *Triggernometry* podcast. He openly admits to being agnostic. Gregg Hurwitz is a novelist, screenwriter, and comic book creator. His contributions to the panel discussion focused on the literary style and genre of the stories in the gospels as well as their buildup to the climactic crucifixion. He grew up in an atheistic, but proudly culturally Jewish, household and went to a Jesuit high school. Dr. James Orr is an associate professor of philosophy of religion at Cambridge University. He is a practicing Anglican. John Veraeke, an associate professor of psychology and cognitive science at the University of Toronto, was a born-again Christian earlier in life but is no longer a Christian. He is a skeptic in the ancient sense, meaning one who inquires and wants to learn. He speaks on behalf of the "nones" of the world.⁸

One of the more interesting panelists is Dennis Prager, author of *The Rational Bible Series* and co-founder of PragerU. He is a strong and committed Jew. He comments on the Christian gospels from his Jewish background, belief, and theology. Dr. Douglas Hedley, like Dr. Orr, is a professor of philosophy of religion at Cambridge University. Based on his comments, he appears to be a Protestant. He frequently cites the ancient Greek and Hebrew texts

7. See Appendix 1 for a simplified outline of the series with references read and discussed.

8. *Nones* is a term given to those people who fall into one of three groups. 1) Atheists: People who do not believe there is a god(s). 2) Agnostics: People who do not know which god is real. 3) The nothings: The largest subgroup. These people may be spiritual and believe in a higher power, but they do not identify with a particular church or tradition.

in his comments. The most biblically conservative Christian on the panel is Dr. Stephen Blackwood, the president of Ralston College. When he speaks on the text, one can expect a more biblically sound and gospel-driven response. His voice often gets overshadowed by the final panelist, Jonathan Pageau, who will be discussed later.

An unfortunate feature of Peterson's reading of the four gospels is that he uses a Bible translation called *The Single Gospel: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John Consolidated into a Single Narrative*.⁹ This book combines the four Gospels into a single, unified text. Because of this combination, Peterson, the panelists, and the audience miss the unique aspects of each gospel account and the emphases that each writer makes. On the other hand, it allows the panelists to cover more material without having to examine each gospel account that contains overlapping information. We see an example of this blending of accounts from Matthew 3:3, Mark 1:2, Luke 3:5–6, and John 1:7–8, which transform into the following,

3. John came to bear testimony, to bear witness to the light, so that through him all might believe. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify about the light. For he was the one spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said, Behold, I will send my messenger ahead of you, who shall prepare thy way before thee, with a voice shouting in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make his paths straight! Every valley shall be filled in, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; the crooked roads shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; and all mankind shall see the salvation that God provides.'¹⁰

As you can tell, Averitt wove various gospel strands into a single paragraph that no single gospel writer ever wrote.

9. This book was written by Neil Averitt, a Harvard Law graduate. He studied biblical Greek and monastic traditions alongside his editorial work for the Federal Trade Commission to produce a Chronological, singular account of the four gospels, aiming to provide a more accessible text for modern readers while maintaining the linguistic integrity of the original sources. *The Single Gospel* was published in 2015 by Wipf and Stock Publishers.

10. Neil Averitt, *The Single Gospel: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John Consolidated into a Single Narrative* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2015), 32, quoted in Jordan B. Peterson, *The Gospels*, Episode 1, The Daily Wire, 1:00:00.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The meaning of the four gospels has been discussed and debated by theologians, philosophers, politicians, and others throughout the ages. Peterson's methodology for arriving at his conclusions, along with the terminology and implications of his interpretations, makes his presentation of the gospels something new while simultaneously echoing long-standing interpretations. His hermeneutic relies heavily on his secular knowledge. As a global figure, his presentation of the gospels has had a definite impact and influence on secular society's view of the Bible, Christianity, and Christ. To assess his impact and influence on secular society and on Christianity, one needs to examine what people have said about his work thus far. His presentation of *The Gospels*, along with his other Bible series, has been discussed by Christians from various Christian denominations worldwide, as well as by many atheists.

Impact and Influence

Although this paper addresses Peterson's presentation of the four gospels from his latest docuseries, it is helpful to acknowledge the impact and influence Peterson has already had through his other Bible series, including Genesis, Exodus, and the Foundations of the West. On one side, there are those who loved his lectures and discussions on the first two books of the Bible. In *The Psychological Significance of the Biblical Stories*, which focuses on Genesis, Peterson discusses chaos and order at creation, the nature of evil, what it means to sacrifice, and

how these stories have been integral to Western society. His Genesis lectures have garnered millions of views on YouTube. Tens of thousands of people have commented on his videos. Every one of his videos has a positive like-to-dislike ratio.

A vast majority of the comments made in the comments section are also positive. Some people go so far as to say that Peterson has saved them. One commenter asserted, “This man saved me from a very dark form of nihilism. I cannot express the psychological transformation I’ve made since discovering him about 3 years ago. This lecture series is the consolation of my life, and it will be the consolation in my death.”¹¹ Another has noted, “Never thought that, as a non believer, I could be so excited for a lecture on God.”¹² The lectures not only captivate people with their content but also improve the listener’s well-being. A commenter claimed, “These lectures have helped me battle drug addiction. Slaying one impulse at a time. Thank you Dr. Peterson. I am beyond grateful for your wisdom.”¹³

It is obvious when reading through more comments that people embrace what Peterson is teaching. One gets a sense that the way he presents the material feels like a struggle for Peterson himself as he wrestles with the text, thus allowing the person listening to wrestle with Peterson as he explains the text to them. Therefore, when Peterson reaches a conclusion and finds the solution to the psychological and sociological problem, a sense of peace permeates both him and the listener.

11. SadistAssassin, comment on Jordan B. Peterson, “Introduction to the Idea of God” in *The Psychological Significance of the Biblical Stories*, episode 1 (2017), YouTube, accessed November 4, 2025.

12. TheSpaceInvaderer, comment on *Psychological Significance*, episode 1, accessed November 4, 2025.

13. Lukasvilla2657, comment on Jordan B. Peterson, “God and the Hierarchy of Authority” in *The Psychological Significance of the Biblical Stories*, episode 3 (2017), YouTube, accessed November 4, 2025.

The same is true for Peterson's latest series on the gospels. As noted above, one can find the first episode of *The Gospels* on YouTube, while *The Daily Wire*'s website hosts the other episodes exclusively. The first episode for the series garnered 750,000 views as of December 2025 and over 2,000 comments with the majority being exceptionally positive.¹⁴ By February 2026, the view count was over 860,000, with more than 21,000 likes. Scrolling through the comments a person will find reflections from people on how this series has brought people back to the church,¹⁵ opened spiritually blind eyes to the truth,¹⁶ and brought spouses closer together.¹⁷ The impact of his recent series has been substantial to those who have listened to it. This is true not only physically, as in the case above with the person fighting his drug addiction, but also emotionally, as the commentator noted about their spouse.

However, Peterson's work has its share of critics. While the majority of commenters on his videos accept what Peterson says, many Christian-based magazines, article reviews, and blogs fill their pages with harsh criticism for his interpretation. Heuer says,

The damage that Peterson has done has been to allegorize and relativize Christ and the Bible into oblivion in the minds of many of his listeners. If you watch Peterson's lectures and read his books without a pre-existing grounding in Scripture, you would walk away thinking that the Bible is a remarkable collection of stories that provide spiritual and psychological insights into how to live a virtuous, happy life. What you will not hear is the gospel.¹⁸

Another Christian critic likewise takes issue with Peterson's use of hermeneutics when he says,

14. Peterson, *The Gospels*, episode 1, YouTube.

15. Nawhatererr, comment on Jordan B. Peterson, "Birth—Youth—Baptism," in *The Gospels*, episode 1 (2024), YouTube, accessed November 4, 2025.

16. TheLayman123, comment on *The Gospels*, episode 1, accessed November 4, 2025.

17. evil-scotsman335, comment on *The Gospels*, episode 1, accessed November 4, 2025

18. Jonah Heuer, "The Gospel According to Jordan Peterson," TruthScript (May 30, 2025), <https://truthscript.com/culture/the-gospel-according-to-jordan-peterson/> (September 9, 2025).

Peterson clearly reads the Gospels through the lens of Jungian psychology, and also through the idea of archetypal anthropological and sociological forms that he sees channeled through the Gospels and their value for a well-ordered life and society. *His Jungian presuppositions are so strong that they dominate the text.* He does not *listen* to the Gospels, but rewrites them in support of his Jungian views.¹⁹ (emphasis original)

Conservative Christians have noted these concerns for some time, even during the Genesis lectures and then again during the Exodus panel discussions. Reflecting the same concerns regarding *The Gospels*, McGrew posted that,

Conservative Christians may understandably approach this sort of project with caution, given Peterson's ongoing tendency to confuse exegesis with eisegesis as he handles the Scriptures. Reviewers of his latest book raise the concern that while he's undoubtedly sincere, he still appears very far from a proper understanding of how God has revealed Himself to man.²⁰

When I prompted Gemini²¹ with “What would a Lutheran say about Jordan Peterson's Bible series *The Gospels*?” I received this summary statement: “A Lutheran would likely view Jordan Peterson's Bible series with a mix of interest and concern. While they would appreciate his emphasis on the importance of biblical stories for understanding human nature and culture, they would also find his approach lacking from a specifically theological perspective.”²² The AI

19. Nicholas Piotrowski, “Gospel Scholarship Pell-Mell: A Critical Review of Jordan Peterson's *The Gospels*,” Christoverall (n.d.), <https://christoverall.com/article/longform/gospel-scholarship-pell-mell-a-critical-review-of-jordan-petersons-the-gospels/>.

20. Bethel McGrew, “Jordan Peterson Examines the Gospels,” WORLD (December 27, 2024). <https://wng.org/opinions/jordan-peterson-examines-the-gospels-1734805339>.

21. Gemini is a multimodal artificial intelligence (AI) developed by Google. Gemini serves as an AI partner to provide empathetic, insightful, and transparent assistance. Unlike traditional search engines, it functions as a conversational collaborator that integrates diverse data types—from live web results to visual prompts—to solve complex problems alongside the user.

22. Text generated by Gemini, Google, in response to “What would a Lutheran say about Jordan Peterson's Bible series *The Gospels*?” September 10, 2025.

response continued by listing certain points a Lutheran would appreciate, as well as the concerns and critiques a Lutheran would have.²³

Summarizing the two dominating opinions on Peterson's past and present biblical works are as follows: 1) the common person, who lacks theological training, likes and loves them, or 2) theologians and those grounded in scriptural doctrine criticize and condemn them. A battle between the two opinions will likely continue. To win this battle, one must replace subjective opinion with a foundation built on scriptural truth. This requires a diligent study of the Bible's teachings on God and the human condition. Through the reinforcement of these truths through study, they move from internalized beliefs to articulated confessions. Consequently, the individual becomes better equipped to defend their convictions and correct misunderstandings with clarity and confidence.

23. The good: Valuing the Bible's importance, the problem of sin and suffering, and the Logos as Christ; The concerns: Improper distinctions of law and gospel, and God as "useful" for my life.

WHERE THE GOSPEL OF BEING APPEARS

Despite the love and adoration that the common person gives to Peterson's latest series, we need to address some serious issues. The main message of the four gospels, as presented by Peterson in *The Gospels*, is obscured and essentially destroyed. The central message of the four Gospels is that Jesus Christ did all that was necessary for my salvation and saved me from my sins. Peterson promotes a gospel of being that shows Jesus not as our Savior from sin, but as a social example and leader for our world. This view of interpretation, held by Peterson and then amplified by Jonathan Pageau, the final panelist, affects several essential doctrines found in the four gospels. The gospel of being affects the doctrines of Christology, soteriology, and sanctification. The gospel of being additionally impacts what the Bible says on the roles of men and women, the authority of Christ, the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture, and the three uses of the law.

Ultimately, with his interpretation of these other doctrines, Peterson corrupts the doctrine of justification. This doctrine teaches that we are saved not by our works, but by the grace of God. Christ's perfect obedience to the law and his death on the cross were the payment for our sins. By Christ's resurrection from the grave, he assures us of this forgiveness which he gives to us freely. This chief doctrine on which the church stands thus finds itself attacked on another battlefield. A battle not with church leaders or politicians, but a battle against influencer culture. A battle with the gospel of being.

It All Goes Back to Hermeneutics

When analyzing and interpreting the Bible, each person, whether they are aware of it or not, possesses some method of interpretation. Many factors contribute to the formation of this method and the criteria used to support the reasoning behind it. For example, the individual's bias plays a factor in how they understand the text. An individual's background, shaped by past life experiences, will influence what in the text is perceived as more significant than what another individual with a different background might see. The context in which something happens and the way someone states it impacts the interpretation.

How a person interprets Scripture is not limited to the nature of the person, it also involves nurture. If someone grew up attending church regularly and invested their time in God's Word from a young age, they will likely hold a different view of God, salvation, and the church. Someone new to Christianity lacks that influence from their formative years. Likewise, the denomination of Christianity and the specific synod within that denomination with which the person belongs will influence their hermeneutics. The more theologically liberal leaning the denomination, the freer their stance is on theological issues such as inspiration, original sin, and justification. A more theologically conservative denomination will be firmer in its stance on the fundamental truths of Scripture.

As these influences begin to shape one's perspective on the biblical text, one no longer understands and interprets the text properly, but forces a meaning onto the text that isn't truly there.²⁴ Unfortunately, this misuse of interpretation is quite common and can be seen in the church at various times. Prior to the Reformation, the primary methods of interpretation included

24. Paul Wendland, "An Overview of Lutheran Hermeneutics in the 21st Century," revised 2023, 1.

the historical-grammatical, the allegorical, the moral-tropological, the typological, and the anagogical.

During the Reformation and Post-Reformation eras, the historical-grammatical method held sway among Protestant churches. Both Lutheran and Reformed churches agreed that the Bible was the inspired, inerrant Word of God, and its own best interpreter. In fact, Scripture had to interpret itself since it alone was God-breathed. It followed, then, that no other human tradition, philosophy, or writing could be placed above it.... One might call this interpretative period, the era of biblical realism. Believers were encouraged to look for the literal or plain sense of a passage, and to regard it as clear and historical.²⁵

Not everyone interprets the Bible in the way the reformers did. As noted above, other methods of interpretation were already present in the church before the Reformation, and various methods are still in use in our postmodern world. In this postmodern world, there is no shortage of interpretations people may spew claiming to be the truth. By following the postmodern thought of subjectivism, feelings and emotions are considered the basis for interpreting Scripture, rather than historical or literal senses of the words. Potentially, there can be as many interpretations as there are individuals who read the text. This is where Lutheran hermeneutics ultimately distinguishes itself from the rest. Lutheran hermeneutics places the emphasis “on the centrality of the unconditional gospel of God’s grace in Jesus Christ.”²⁶ In fact, “The entire Bible is the account of God’s love come down to save us. This is the key hermeneutical insight of the Lutheran Church.”²⁷

Within the wide variety of postmodern viewpoints on the Bible, one can find elements of this philosophical thought scattered throughout Peterson’s interpretation. When mapping Peterson’s hermeneutical use of God’s Word, one must understand that he also employs different

25. Wendland, “Lutheran Hermeneutics,” 2–3.

26. Wendland, “Lutheran Hermeneutics,” 12.

27. Wendland, “Lutheran Hermeneutics,” 13.

definitions of terms than what one would expect. Words such as myth, sin, revelation, redemption, and even God have departed from the definition accepted by Christianity to a psychological definition. A Parker's *Pensées* article significantly expands upon the mapping of Peterson's theology, presenting several additional examples of words that Peterson redefines along with their meanings. This article is indispensable for giving a clear explanation of Peterson's terminology.²⁸ For example,

Revelation is not a divine message from a transcendent divine being, God. Revelation, rather, shares a common origin with myth in the "collective unconscious."... Myth is a broader category which encompasses stories about divine revelation. Myths generally carry implicit knowledge which is then abstracted out and made explicit, whereas revelation, nested in mythology, carries explicit knowledge....

The fall, for Peterson, is not a historical event, but rather the mythological representation of the dramatic emergence of the human race from consciousness to *self*-consciousness.²⁹ (emphasis original)

However, even if one uses a slightly different definition of terms, they must still use the words correctly in the context in which one finds them. "We must follow legitimate rules of hermeneutics. Scripture passages dare never be torn out of their connection, out of their setting, divorced from the way the holy writer himself uses the passage, or made to mean something which the words themselves cannot mean."³⁰ Peterson wouldn't be opposed to using other material and people to help derive the meaning. He would favor the side of Bishop Robert

28. See Appendix 2 for definitions of some of Peterson's theological terms based on this article.

29. Parker Settecase, "Mapping Peterson's Meaning: An Evangelical Analysis of Jordan Peterson's Theology," *Trendsettercase* (December 14, 2019), <https://trendsettercase.wordpress.com/2019/12/14/mapping-petersons-meaning-an-evangelical-analysis-of-jordan-petersons-theology/#:~:text=It's%20a%20truly%20emergent%20document,over%20unfathomable%20spans%20of%20time>.

30. Harold Wicke, "What is Doctrine According to Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions?" in *Our Great Heritage* vol. 1, ed. Lyle Lange (Milwaukee: Northwestern, 1991), 77.

Barron, who said that the interpretation of the text is why the church is needed.³¹ But, Peterson would not limit himself to the church's interpretation.

The conceptual framework of the Bible in the mind of Peterson is that “1) It is a comedy³². 2) It constitutes a dramatic record of self-realization or abstraction. 3) It takes a phenomenological approach. 4) It's a collection of books with multiple redactors and editors.³³ 5) It is the world's first hyper-linked text.”³⁴ These five key points that Peterson points out are telling of his overall thoughts of the Bible. A Lutheran would unlikely make any of these the main concepts to emphasize when talking about the framework of the Bible.

Words, language, and speech are wonderful gifts from God. The written Word of God, as well as the oral teaching of the Word transmitted from generation to generation, are priceless gifts of God's grace. But, when the interpretation diminishes the importance of these words as they present themselves in Scripture, one faces interpretations that fit the person's thinking.

Not only are the organs of speech a gift of God, but language itself is a creation of God.... But if [we read the Bible for finding some hidden truth, or as merely written history, or to be interpreted in the light of science, then] the words of the Bible are nothing more than a fallible human description of the mighty acts of God, then we have a very poor foundation for faith and certainty. Men will constantly be forced to sift and to winnow the accounts of Scripture in order to separate the chaff from the wheat. In the final analysis, men will have to depend on their own judgment, depraved and corrupted though it is through the fall, to lead them along the right way.³⁵

31. Jordan B. Peterson, “Miracles,” in *The Gospels*, episode 3 (2024), 0:39:00, accessed Dailywire.

32. Peterson means “comedy” in the Greek comedy sense. We may use the term “drama” instead.

33. It would be no surprise to learn that Peterson is a Yahwist, Elohist, Deuteronomist, and Priestly (JEDP) theory proponent. He says that the Bible, especially the beginning books, are collections from different tribes that saw these stories as important. Their importance necessitated the gathering of these materials into what we have today as the Old Testament.

34. Jordan B. Peterson, “Introduction to the Idea of God,” in *The Psychological Significance of the Biblical Stories*, episode 1 (2017), 1:30:00, YouTube, accessed January 15, 2026.

35. Siegbert Becker, “The Scriptures, Inspired by God,” in *Our Great Heritage* vol. 1, ed. Lyle Lange (Milwaukee: Northwestern, 1991), 132–136.

Essentially, Peterson's hermeneutics does not align with the way Lutherans interpret the Bible. Lutherans view the Bible as God's inspired and inerrant Word. Without this foundation, Peterson goes to improper and false interpretations. This difference will be explored soon. Examining Peterson's past work experiences reveals an influence from the social realm that will significantly impact his interpretation. His schooling and work experience with psychology will bring in the wisdom and reasoning of the civil realm. His engagement with modern social issues, such as the role of men in society, will affect how he views sanctification. These factors, as well as others that will emerge later, lead Peterson to interpret the four Gospels as a gospel of being.

The Problem Crystallizes

The final panelist for *The Gospels* also significantly influences how Peterson understands the four Gospels. Christian thinker and artist Jonathan Pageau is a member of the Eastern Orthodox Church. His interpretations are nearly exclusively allegorical and provide a false or misdirected reading of the text, as they depart from the straightforward reading of the text. Peterson builds much of his philosophical and psychological interpretations based on Pageau's explanation of the text. It is here that the problem with Peterson's hermeneutics becomes most apparent throughout the series. Throughout *The Gospels*, Peterson, with the help of Jonathan Pageau, consistently creates improper allegorical interpretations from the text.

As previously touched upon, Peterson's view of the Bible does not align with Lutherans. Confessional Lutherans see Christ throughout the Bible, either through explicit or implicit foreshadowing, or a direct accounting of what Christ did and what that means for us. By contrast, the allegorical method used by Pageau will go further in seeing figures or events as foreshadowing Christ, even when the text itself does not explicitly dictate that approach. The

allegorical method seeks to uncover the hidden or obscure meaning of the text and relate it to the reader through a symbolic or spiritual interpretation of the literal words.

The origins of this hermeneutic can be traced back to Philo of Alexandria and adopted by many prominent Christian Church Fathers. Some Reformers themselves also used it at times. So, is allegory a legitimate manner of interpreting the Bible, then? As a way of making applications, possibly. That does not make it any less dangerous. And it is certainly dangerous. It quickly takes away from the meaning of the text itself. “It downgrades the importance of the historical account, urging readers to proceed higher in order to understand the more ‘spiritual’ mysteries awaiting those who are capable of discerning them.”³⁶ One of the basic principles of hermeneutics is to interpret the literature as the type of literature that it is. A person reads narrative as narrative, history as history, poetry as poetry. It is not legitimate to interpret the text allegorically when there is no justifiable reason within the text or context to do so. In this sense, allegory is never a good option for interpretation and thus should not be the first manner of interpretation that one employs.

If allegory is even to be used at all, it must be kept on a tight leash so as not to lose the shine and sparkle of the text itself. “Allegories were never meant to arrive at truth; they were only adornments and illustrations of the truth.”³⁷ Luther likewise shared this sentiment when he stated, “Therefore let those who want to make use of allegories base them on the historical account itself. The historical account is like logic in that it teaches what is certainly true; the allegory, on the other hand, is like rhetoric in that it ought to illustrate the historical account but

36. Paul Wendland, “Is Allegorizing a Legitimate Manner of Biblical Interpretation?” Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, 2006, <http://essays.wls.edu:8080/xmlui/handle/123456789/816>, 22.

37. Wendland, “Is Allegorizing Legitimate?” 25.

has no value at all for giving proof.”³⁸ Wendland explains the danger of using the allegorical method to interpret Scripture with these words.

If the allegorizing approach is legitimate, then words can mean virtually anything the interpreter wants them to mean, and any Scripture text a person wants to use can be cited to illumine virtually any other text, even if the two are not parallel. All meaning of all texts will ultimately dissolve into a radical kind of postmodern intertextuality. This is why Origen’s and Augustine’s approach to interpretation was bound to lead to the embracing of parallel sources of authority alongside the Scripture. If any passage in the Bible can be read apart from its historical context and if even contextually-defined words like “day” in Genesis are capable of holding many meanings, then Scripture can no longer be relied upon as the last word. It is no longer clear. The pious will have to be directed instead to the teaching tradition of the community. Authority in the church, in a practical sense, will necessarily pass from the Word of God to the authorized readings of scholars within the community.³⁹

To be fair to Peterson and Pageau, it is not as if every time they see a passage, they exclude the literal meaning of the text. Neither do they continually add to the text something that has nothing to do with the text. In fact, Peterson often points out the literal meaning of the historical account and bases his psychological understandings on it. He connects many of the underlying social and self-issues found in the text with modern-day diagnoses. He explains how the problems of the past continue to occur in his clinical work. Peterson and Pageau’s problem is that they often, but not always, overlook the literal and clearest meaning in the interest of other meanings that may or may not be true.⁴⁰ In interpreting parables, Peterson will extend the parable beyond the main point and often misses the point of the parable in doing so.⁴¹

38. Martin Luther, *Lectures on Genesis Chapters 1-5*, *LW* Vol 1: Page 233, in *Luther’s Works*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (Saint Louis: Concordia, 1958).

39. Wendland, “Is Allegorizing Legitimate?” 16.

40. Roland Cap Ehlke, “Understanding the Bible” in *Our Great Heritage* vol. 1, ed. Lyle Lange (Milwaukee: Northwestern, 1991), 256–258.

41. Jordan B. Peterson, “Parables,” in *The Gospels*, episode 5, (2024), accessed Dailywire.

Misunderstandings arise due to a failure to distinguish between interpreting what the text means and how it applies. Interpretation and application are two separate things. For example, the Bible states, “You shall not kill.” An application of that truth means that John Smith should not have killed his friend, even though the text does not mention John Smith. It is an adequate and proper application of the truth of the passage. Interpretation is singular; applications are many.

Peterson and Pageau also acknowledge that there is an underlying feeling about the text. He mentions that there is a “spirit” of the text that unites different panelists’ interpretations and can be felt by the panelists when they arrive at the correct interpretation. He mentions that they can tell when this spirit is present due to the absence of intellectual pride. The spirit of inquiry and humility come together among the panelists, which shows that they can learn from each other.⁴² In a manner of speaking, Peterson is trying to explain John 6:63⁴³ and 1 Cor 2:14⁴⁴ in his own words.⁴⁵ He demonstrates that the Spirit is at work through the Word of God and the panelists feel that power in their discussions.

Harkening back to the methods of interpretation, opponents of Confessional Lutheranism’s hermeneutics may contend that the historical-grammatical method, which Confessional Lutherans employ, is not superior to other methods. I would counter that those other methods of interpretation employ a “method of doubt.” The argument posits that since we

42. Jordan B. Peterson, “The Beginning of the Ministry,” in *The Gospels*, episode 2 (2024), 0:28:00, accessed Dailywire.

43. ⁶³ The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you—they are full of the Spirit and life.

44. ¹⁴ The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit.

45. Unless otherwise indicated, all biblical quotations are from NIV.

cannot be entirely certain of the historical significance and circumstances, we cannot be certain that we have the correct interpretation. Some methods that fall into this “method of doubt” category include illegitimate textual criticism, source criticism, form criticism, and historical criticism, which all raise doubts and deny the inspiration or inerrancy of Scripture in some fashion. Only the historical-grammatical method properly gives Scripture its true light.⁴⁶

The historical-grammatical method likewise lays out what Scripture simply says without discovering “something new” in the Bible. “This is the interesting thing about Christian (Lutheran) theology. It does not say new things. ‘The church cannot set forth any new words.’⁴⁷ It just says them well.... ‘A proper explanation of Scripture is precisely nothing else than Scripture itself.’⁴⁸ In other words, Lutherans are fine with explanations of Scripture just as Scripture is.”⁴⁹

The importance of comparing the historical-grammatical method and the allegorical method becomes evident in the essential doctrines of Christianity, which serve as pillars of the faith. It is not a case of “He said, she said,” but of eternal consequence for those listening. The use of allegory by Pageau, which Peterson accepts and expands upon, leads him to the gospel of being as a legitimate interpretation of the text. According to Peterson, it is the only logical

46. Siegbert Becker, “The Historical-Critical Method of Bible Interpretation” in *Our Great Heritage* vol. 1, ed. Lyle Lange (Milwaukee: Northwestern, 1991).

47. Holsten Fagerberg, *A New Look at the Lutheran Confessions, 1529-1537* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1988), 32, cited in Benjamin Tomczak, “Hermeneutics and the Confessions,” Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (2016).

48. C.F.W. Walther, “Church Fathers and Doctrine,” *Essays for the Church* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1992), 2:70, cited in Benjamin Tomczak, “Hermeneutics and the Confessions,” Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (2016).

49. Benjamin Tomczak, “Hermeneutics and the Confessions,” Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, 2016, <http://essays.wls.edu:8080/xmlui/handle/123456789/7391>, 6–7.

interpretation, excluding other possible interpretations. Three specific areas where the gospel of being appears will be addressed and analyzed—Christology, Soteriology, and Sanctification.

Peterson's Christology of Being

As one would expect from starting a series based on the four Gospels, one would begin by examining the central figure of these four gospels—Jesus of Nazareth. Who is this Jesus of Nazareth? Why do I care about him? What did he do? To answer these questions, Peterson immediately explores the concept of the Logos in John 1, examining both his identity and essence. To Peterson, the Logos is the “re-representation of the creative spirit of God that makes itself manifest when time begins and when new things come into being.”⁵⁰ In other words, the Logos is the ultimate being of reality that gives meaning, order, and creativity and therefore is the ultimate pattern of being we should follow.

The series consistently connects the Logos to Christ Jesus. Yet the definition of who and what the Logos is remains incomplete and inaccurate. The Logos in the series makes Christ merely a prime example of what it means to be human. This definition that Peterson paints is not entirely wrong. Lutherans would agree with many aspects of his definition. His explanation of Jesus being the prime human is true in that Jesus was born without sin and lived according to God's law perfectly. However, to describe Jesus merely in terms of his humanity is inadequate. It simply does not say enough and therefore disagrees with Scripture. Christ is the Son of Man, yes, but he is also the Son of God. Jesus is true God. Peterson implies that Jesus is God, but using his

50. Jordan B. Peterson, “The Sins of Adam and the True Nature of Eve,” YouTube video, 1:17:44, May 30, 2024, 0:55:00, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R2f13GzlGnc&list=WL&index=14&t=3279s>.

terminology and following the gospel of being that simply means that Jesus is the ultimate being, the order bringer, the truth teller. Notice the difference between his emphases and those articulated in the Athanasian Creed.⁵¹

Peterson's gospel of being lacks the precision found in the Athanasian Creed and the clear teachings of Scripture. While the creed defines Christ by his divine and human natures, Peterson's interpretation reframes Christ as a leader to follow and an example to emulate. However, while Christ certainly fulfills these roles, elevating them to the core of his identity is theologically insufficient. This is evident when Jesus rides into Jerusalem during Holy Week, and the people say, "Blessed are you who comes in the name of the Lord" (Matt 21:9). Peterson

51. Whoever wishes to be saved must, above all else, hold to the true Christian faith. Whoever does not keep this faith pure in all points will certainly perish forever. Now this is the true Christian faith: We worship one God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity, without mixing the persons or dividing the divine being. For each person—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—is distinct, but the deity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is one, equal in glory and coeternal in majesty. What the Father is, so is the Son, and so is the Holy Spirit. The Father is uncreated, the Son uncreated, the Holy Spirit uncreated; the Father is infinite, the Son infinite, the Holy Spirit infinite; the Father is eternal, the Son eternal, the Holy Spirit eternal; yet they are not three who are eternal, but there is one who is eternal, just as they are not three who are uncreated, nor three who are infinite, but there is one who is uncreated and one who is infinite. In the same way the Father is almighty, the Son is almighty, the Holy Spirit is almighty; yet they are not three who are almighty, but there is one who is almighty. So the Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Spirit is God; yet they are not three Gods, but one God. So the Father is Lord, the Son is Lord, the Holy Spirit is Lord; yet they are not three Lords, but one Lord. For just as Christian truth compels us to confess each person individually to be God and Lord, so the true Christian faith forbids us to speak of three Gods or three Lords. The Father is neither made nor created nor begotten of anyone. The Son is neither made nor created, but is begotten of the Father alone. The Holy Spirit is neither made nor created nor begotten, but proceeds from the Father and the Son. So there is one Father, not three Fathers; one Son, not three Sons; one Holy Spirit, not three Holy Spirits. And within this Trinity none comes before or after; none is greater or inferior; but all three persons are coequal and coeternal, so that in every way, as stated before, the Trinity in Unity and Unity in Trinity is to be worshiped. Whoever wishes to be saved must have this conviction of the Trinity.

It is furthermore necessary for eternal salvation that one faithfully believe that our Lord Jesus Christ also took on human flesh. Now this is the true Christian faith: We believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, God's Son, is both God and man. He is God, eternally begotten from the nature of the Father, and he is man, born in time from the nature of his mother, fully God, fully man, with rational soul and human flesh; equal to the Father as to his deity, less than the Father as to his humanity; and though he is both God and man, Christ is not two persons but one: one, not by changing the deity into flesh, but by taking the humanity into God; one, indeed, not by mixture of the natures, but by unity in one person; for just as the rational soul and flesh is one human being, so God and man is one Christ. He suffered for our salvation, descended into hell, rose the third day from the dead. He ascended into heaven, is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, and from there will come to judge the living and the dead. At his coming all people will rise with their own bodies to answer for their personal deeds. Those who have done good will enter eternal life, but those who have done evil will go into eternal fire.

This is the true Christian faith. Whoever does not faithfully and firmly believe this cannot be saved.

explains that phrase, saying that if someone walks the way of God, then they will be a blessing to others. If someone comes as a representative of the Logos, then they come blessed. Jesus is the ultimate representation of this coming and blessedness.⁵² When talking about John, the author of the gospel, he says the following.

[John] is trying to identify who the core phenomenon of being is, and it is in this story not material, it's being itself... He's trying to characterize the spirit of being itself. And he's making a claim, the claim is that it is embodied in Christ, it's the same as the divine principle that generated order at the beginning of time. It's apprehensible. It's foundational. And it's also the fullest expression, this isn't directly in this text but it emerges, it is the fullest expression of the tradition that is made manifest in the Old Testament. And it emerges out of our primordial stories and announces itself as the principle of being itself.⁵³

This view that Christ is the Logos, the supreme human being, connects closely to the necessity and purpose of Christ's baptism. Peterson's neurophysiological take on the necessity and purpose of Christ's baptism is that "men must undergo an initiation ceremony much like the Judeo-Christian ceremony of baptism before they can have their own individuality. Often associated with a [rite of] passage or a re-emersion into the sacred waters or into the chaos. It's a dissolution into the chaos and a restructuring."⁵⁴ If baptism is only a rite of initiation and a restructuring of one's life from chaos to order, then baptism loses all of its blessings that are so dear.

There are some commonalities in this view of baptism, including its purpose, between Peterson and many evangelical Christians who see it as a rite of passage or initiation into the church. "Baptism is the outward expression of your inner faith," as I have heard it explained

52. Jordan B. Peterson, "Holy Week and The Last Supper," in *The Gospels*, episode 8 (2024), 0:23:00, accessed Dailywire.

53. Peterson, *The Gospels*, episode 1, 0:45:00.

54. Peterson, *The Gospels*, episode 1, 1:06:00.

from a Wesleyan church member.⁵⁵ However, Peterson's take is solidly psychological in nature, with a focus on the language of chaos and order.

By contrast, Confessional Lutherans view baptism as a gift of God's grace. Baptism is outward and external in that a person visibly sees the water poured on the recipient and hears the pronouncement, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit." Yet it is also internal in that it bestows the gift of forgiveness of sins, eternal life, and salvation to the recipient through the working of the Holy Spirit. The gospel of being, by comparison, sees baptism as an upward-orienting task, something one does for oneself and, by extension, for the highest good—God. The Bible speaks of baptism as a downward, God-to-human event. It is God who comes and gives us faith and forgiveness.

The panel also discusses the Logos in relation to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. According to the gospel of being, during the Lord's Supper, a person consumes the Logos, meaning that they not only say the words but take in the Logos. By doing this, they unite with the community at large, and it becomes a total transformation of the person. This transformation of the person and what they do afterwards is a sort of sacrifice. Peterson says that, although the sacrament is efficacious, the person still bears a responsibility. A person still needs to make spiritual sacrifices. They don't offer these on an altar, as the Old Testament believers did. Instead, one's sufferings and things they give up for the sake of Christ are spiritual sacrifices that they give to God.⁵⁶ The Eastern Orthodox view of progressive justification and sanctification,

55. Anonymous member.

56. Jordan B. Peterson, "Betrayal and Trial," in *The Gospels*, episode 9 (2024), 0:31:00, accessed Dailywire.

known as “theosis,” is a belief held by Pageau. This concept mirrors both Peterson’s and Bishop Barron’s perspectives.

Sadly, the focus changes from Christ and the wonderful blessings that the Lord’s Supper gives, namely, forgiveness of sins, eternal life, and salvation, to an emphasis on what one does for God. The arrows point upward toward God in Holy Communion, according to the gospel of being, rather than focusing on what God is giving me personally in the sacrament. To his credit, Peterson correctly notes the horizontal fellowship between people that occurs during the Lord’s Supper. One of the three communions that happen during The Lord’s Supper is the communion a person shares with all believers in Christ who partake in the sacrament.⁵⁷

With Christ as a mere example and leader, the overarching theme of salvation by grace alone through Christ is destroyed, and the Christian faith is utterly distorted.

Christ embodies the hero, grounded in tradition, who is [the] narrative depiction of the basis for [a] successful individual and social adaption....Christ the Lord is not the second person of the Ontological and Economic Trinity, the Eternal Son of God who stepped into his own creation in the person of Jesus Christ, who literally died on a cross for the sins of the world in time and space and who was raised on the third day by the power of the Holy Spirit. Instead he is the projection of the archetypal hero, the Logos of consciousness, who’s speaking order into chaos is a mythological representation of the third way between order and chaos, which represents our duty to aid in human flourishing by advancing culture.⁵⁸

While the definition of who Christ was is flawed, one commendable aspect of Peterson’s interpretation is his emphasis on, and the significance of, Christ’s coming to this earth in humility, lowliness, and for all people, especially the lower classes of society. With his definition of the Logos as Christ Jesus, the God over all, he notes the monumental nature of his being born

57. The other two communions are: the bread and wine in, with, and under the body and blood. The third is the communion between God and the person receiving the Lord’s Supper.

58. Settecase, “Mapping Peterson’s Meaning.”

to a virgin, under a tyrannical state with a tyrannical “god”—Caesar—ruling over it. The many factors and events that happen during Christ’s incarnation and birth show Christ’s humiliation. The baby is born in a lowly place. The highest and the lowest coincide with this most important baby being born in lowly conditions. The fact that angels announce this birth to the shepherds amplifies this message. The shepherds are lowly individuals. But they also protect the lowly sheep. All this proves Peterson’s point that Christ came even for such people as that. Christ came not to be served, but to serve.⁵⁹

When referencing Matt 20:28,⁶⁰ Peterson notes that the Bible uses both “Son of Man” and “Son of God” to speak about Jesus. After all, “‘The Son of Man’ was Jesus’ favorite way of referring to himself. While this term obviously points to his human nature, it does not denote that nature exclusively.”⁶¹ Peterson’s approach to Christology is more observational than confessional. He recognizes and acknowledges how the Bible describes Jesus without fully committing to the orthodox doctrine of the hypostatic union—the belief that Jesus is simultaneously fully God and fully man. While he stops short of a personal confession of faith, he is clearly captivated by the gospel of John. He finds it intellectually profound and striking that the text identifies this specific, historical man with the eternal, timeless creator of the universe. It is profound and striking, because “this divine person ‘became flesh.’ This does not mean that he turned into a man and stopped being God.... Rather, the meaning is that the eternally existing

59. Peterson, *The Gospels*, episode 1, 1:42:00.

60. ²⁸ just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

61. Wilbert Gavrish, “The Practical Application of the Doctrine of the Two Natures of Christ,” In *Our Great Heritage* vol. 2, ed. Lyle Lange (Milwaukee: Northwestern, 1991), 447.

Logos took on or assumed a human nature consisting of both body and soul.”⁶² From my analysis, Peterson is unwilling to confess the full truth about who Christ is. He would rather meld the literal description of Christ with his own psychological interpretation.

Apart from mentioning and reiterating Christ as both the Son of Man and the Son of God, Peterson does not take the next step to apply that truth to ourselves. The reason Christ needed to be both God and man is for our salvation. “To serve as our substitute Jesus had to become like us. He had to become our brother.”⁶³ This is one more way in which the gospel of being approaches very close to confessing the true gospel comfort, but then falls short in doing so. That next step of showing Christ, the true God-man, who came to earth, brings comfort for the weary. The gospel of being doesn’t give this comfort.

Although the Old Testament prophecies about the coming Messiah and the New Testament clearly demonstrates that Jesus is that promised Messiah and Savior from sin, that is not the central focus in Peterson’s gospel of being. The central focus shifts from Christ-centered to being-centered, from what God has done for us to what we must become and be in our lives. Christ himself tells us that he is the focus of Scripture.

Christ summed up his whole attitude toward Scripture when he said to the Jews, “You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me” (John 5:39). In these words, Jesus proclaimed that everything in the Old Testament—prophecies, sacrifices, history—pointed toward him.⁶⁴

A predominant theme associated with Peterson’s Christology of being is Jesus’ struggles with human authority. As is correctly recognized in the panel discussion, the Jewish leaders take

62. Gawrisch, “Application of Christ,” 453.

63. Gawrisch, “Application of Christ,” 459.

64. Ehlke, “Understanding the Bible,” 237.

serious issue with Jesus' teaching and claims. This is fleshed out nicely by Peterson and the others. One example involves paying taxes to Caesar. The panelists correctly note the conflict between Jesus and the Jewish leaders. Elsewhere, they notice the conflict Jesus has with his mother and brothers in Matthew 12:48 when Jesus asks, "Who are my mother and brothers?" Peterson's take is that Jesus says his true family supersedes his biological mother and brothers. This family includes those who orient upward. Jesus comes to bring conflict within families. Jonathan Pageau further emphasizes this point by stating that this is the teaching on who the church is. It is those who submit to the law of God in their heart.⁶⁵

When the Jews confront Jesus about his not following their traditions, Jesus corrects their faulty view. The four gospels present Jesus' conflicts with the Jews as a strong testament to the truth. Jesus, who is a Jew just like the religious leaders, is following God's law perfectly and not following the traditions when they violate God's law. Christ receives opposition because of this. Peterson would argue that Jesus is not introducing anything new in terms of tradition or law, but rather restating the prophetic message of the Old Testament. Jesus is revealing and expounding on what the prophets and Moses taught.⁶⁶ Peterson's insight here is correct. Jesus teaches and preaches the Old Testament and says the very words from the Father. This theme of problems with authority finally reaches its height in the crucifixion on Good Friday.

Yet while acknowledging the problems that the Jewish leaders have with Jesus, Peterson will go too far in some instances. He connects this conflict between these people and Jesus not with faulty views of who Christ is, but rather with our inner being that is at conflict with the self and the world. The rejection of Christ is thus not primarily a denial of Christ as the Messiah, but

65. Jordan B. Peterson, "Conflict with Authority," in *The Gospels*, episode 7 (2024), accessed Dailywire.

66. Peterson, *The Gospels*, episode 7, 0:50:00.

a conflict within the people. The people's refusal to address their own selfish issues and failure to orient themselves upward are the problems with the Jewish leaders.⁶⁷ While pride could be a contributing factor to their denial of Jesus, to say that it is the primary problem might be an overstatement.

The Christology of being is not only about the person of Christ, but also about his teaching. In episode four, based on the Sermon on the Mount from Matthew 5, the emphasis shifts from "Christ the healer" to "Christ the philosophical thinker and teacher." As the panelists discuss the Beatitudes, a key thought that arises is Jesus as the new lawgiver. The connection is made between Moses going up the mountain to receive the law with Jesus giving this new law on a mount.⁶⁸ Interestingly, the panelists—including Peterson and Pageau—call Jesus a "new lawgiver," yet their descriptions and interpretation of his teaching actually suggest the opposite: that the message of Jesus' sermon is the same as that found in the Torah. Pageau will say that this "new law" is not really "new," but the old law explained as an issue from the heart, which is a better understanding of the Sermon on the Mount.⁶⁹

Suppose a person analyses the sermon from the gospel of being perspective, though. In that case, the law is then for the purpose of aiming up and being equal with others.⁷⁰ The person who follows God and orients himself upward will want to follow all that Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount. Again, we see Peterson's emphasis on Christ as a leader and example, rather than as the Savior. If Christ is the Logos and the ultimate example of bringing order to

67. Peterson, *The Gospels*, episode 7.

68. Jordan B. Peterson, "The Sermon on the Mount," in *The Gospels*, episode 4 (2024), 0:17:00, accessed Dailywire.

69. Peterson, *The Gospels*, episode 4.

70. Peterson, *The Gospels*, episode 4, 1:04:00.

chaos, of living the best life facing God, and teaching others to do the same, then a person loses the sweetness of the four gospels and the point of the Sermon on the Mount. Peterson views the Sermon on the Mount primarily as the first use of the law, in which the law serves as curb to stop or prevent us from doing evil. In addition, he uses a sprinkling of the third use of the law, which shows us what good looks like. While the Sermon on the Mount legitimately contains the first use of the law, it is primarily a third use of the law since Jesus preaches to his followers.

When believers encounter the law in the Sermon on the Mount, they should experience a triple response. First, they should notice what God says not to do—which is the law as curb. Secondly, they should feel the weight of their failure to keep God’s commands—not only in their outward actions but in their very hearts. This is the second use of the law—the law as mirror to convict the sinner. Thirdly, however, the believer should view the law as a wonderful telling of God’s will. This is the third use of the law as a guide for Christian living. Peterson’s interpretation falls short because it overlooks this second use, failing to account for the law’s unique power to convict and expose the human condition. In doing so, the gospel of being softens the severity of the law, making it something I can follow and truly live out in my life.

In summary, Peterson’s Christology of being redefines some key teachings of the four gospels. He correctly connects Jesus Christ as the Logos. However, the Logos is merely the prime human being. He is the one who perfectly oriented himself upward to God and demonstrated what humility looks like through his actions, his struggles with authority, and his teaching. Because Christ, as the Logos, is an example and leader for Christians, Baptism and the Lord’s Supper become things we do for God, not blessings that God gives to us. The gospel of being overlooks the fact that Christ is the substitute for sin. It ignores that Jesus is both true God and true man, who came to this world for our redemption.

Peterson's Soteriology of Being

Salvation naturally looks different when someone misrepresents the person of Christ. According to Peterson's gospel of being, the biblical teaching of the doctrine of soteriology is corrupted by his interpretation. It changes what the means of grace are for, how people acquire salvation, and the nature of faith. It also alters who receives salvation and redefines the concepts of eternal life and hell. These are some of the issues at play when the gospel of being promotes its interpretation over the truth of the gospel message.

For Lutherans, the sacraments of Holy Baptism and Holy Communion are essential means of grace that God uses to create and sustain faith. Peterson's interpretation of these two sacraments contradicts Scripture. As a result, the definition of means of grace changes. Granted, the definitions for "means of grace" and "sacrament" are not uniform in Christianity.

Recognizing that definitions can vary within Christendom, Confessional Lutherans define the means of grace as follows: The means of grace are the gospel, conveyed in Word and sacrament. This means that God's Word, along with the sacraments of Holy Baptism and Holy Communion, offers, gives, and seals the forgiveness of sins that Jesus won for the world on the cross. The Confessional Lutheran definition of a sacrament is a holy rite that Christ instituted, gives the forgiveness of sins, and uses an earthly element connected with God's Word.⁷¹

The gospel of being does not follow these definitions of the means of grace and sacrament. While the panelists do not use the term "means of grace" within the series, they do allude to the concept. Peterson equates the Logos as the primary mechanism through which people find truth from chaos. Through the Logos, one learns about God and what he wants

71. Martin Luther, *Luther's Catechism: The Small Catechism of Dr. Martin Luther*. Anniversary edition, New International Version. ed. Stephen Geiger (Milwaukee: Northwestern, 2017).

someone to do. Through the Logos, one finds and achieves salvation. The definition of a sacrament for Peterson also closely aligns with his thoughts on transforming chaos into order through the concept of the Logos. A possible definition of a sacrament, according to Peterson, is a rite performed by people for the purpose of orienting oneself toward God or refocusing and recommitting one's life.⁷² As already noted, Baptism is then an initiation ceremony performed by people who want to commit themselves to order in their lives, rather than chaos. Likewise, the Eucharist is merely a symbolic connection between a person and Christ. By partaking of the Eucharist, one reinforces one's duty toward order in one's life. In both instances, it is an upward-focusing man-to-God approach. Scripture clearly teaches that the sacraments are a downward-focusing God-to-man rite, however.

The watering down of the means of grace and sacraments gives Peterson the “excuse” he needs for failing to emphasize the death and resurrection of Christ in the final episode. Despite having an entire episode dedicated to the death and resurrection of Christ, the focus is not on Christ saving the world through this monumental event, but instead on this being the moment of transformation. It is a walk to death, a walk that everyone takes.⁷³ In reference to Jesus' words “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matt 27:46), Peterson says that Jesus is like humans. Humans reach this pinnacle moment in their lives to question God. That is what Jesus is doing with his words.⁷⁴ Jesus shows that he is living life to the fullest when he accepts what is happening to him, just as Abraham did with his “adventure of a lifetime.” The mindset is essentially, “If you live your life fully, you can let go of your life.” So instead of coming down

72. Peterson, *The Gospels*, episode 9, 0:31:00.

73. Jordan B. Peterson, “Crucifixion and Resurrection,” in *The Gospels*, episode 10 (2024), accessed Dailywire.

74. Peterson, *The Gospels*, episode 10, 0:11:00.

from the cross, Jesus shows that he has lived his life to the fullest by not taking the easy path. This contrasts with Adam in the Garden of Eden, who takes the easy path by giving into temptation. Jesus accomplishes what Adam didn't.⁷⁵ The gospel of being is certainly evident in this interpretation of Christ's death on the cross. Christ is robbed of his justifying work on our behalf and is simply the example of undergoing hardship for the purpose of proving what it means to have a full life in this world.

When Peterson tackles the story of the sheep on the Son of Man's right and the goats on his left (Matt 25:31–46), his take on who these people are is astounding. He interprets those who are separated and damned as people who are not keeping with the pattern of the Logos in everything that they do. Moreover, everyone who follows the Logos's pattern earns admission into eternal life for themselves. Peterson argues that this judgment is not reserved solely for the last day; rather, it is an ongoing, daily occurrence navigated through the conscience. This aligns with his broader definition of "eternal life" as living the fullest life according to God. When someone lives this way, they have a full "eternal" life.⁷⁶

According to Peterson, a person's salvation depends not on Christ and believing in him. Rather, salvation depends on how well we orient ourselves according to the Logos's example. If one accepts this definition of salvation, it makes sense that salvation is not just for Christians who believe in Jesus alone. Salvation is available to both believers and unbelievers. Jews and other spiritual people can earn salvation and attain heaven, therefore. Prager, a Jew on the panel, asks: If Jesus says that no one comes to the Father except through him (John 14:5–7), and he

75. Peterson, *The Gospels*, episode 10, 0:19:00.

76. Peterson, *The Gospels*, episode 8, 1:18:00.

personally doesn't believe in Jesus, will he still reach the Father? Peterson responds with a comforting "Yes." Prager can reach the Father because he is following what God wants.⁷⁷

This is not the only way Peterson views salvation, however. In other contexts, he will flip-flop on who will be in heaven and how they get there. In episode three, Peterson correctly states that Jesus is the only way to salvation.⁷⁸ A Confessional Lutheran can commend Peterson when he says that Jesus is the only way to heaven. However, one must remember who Jesus is according to Peterson. Jesus is simply the Logos, the ultimate hero who tells the truth, brings order from chaos, and exemplifies how to orient upward. Faith in Jesus alone is not what saves, but rather honoring and doing what the Logos did in his life. Faith in the Logos does not restrict salvation, but actions do. When discussing the good and bad fish from Matthew 13:47–52, Peterson notes that the fish that God throws away into eternal fire are people who were not worthy of eternal paradise.⁷⁹ Salvation rests entirely on the works of the person, not *sola gratia*, *sola fide*, and *sola scriptura*.⁸⁰

Setting aside salvation and faith, *The Gospels* contains some ambiguous and uncomfortable phrases about forgiveness. One example the panel brings up regards Judas Iscariot. The worst sin possible in Peterson's gospel of being is betrayal. In their discussion about Judas on Maundy Thursday, panelist Hurwitz asks if Judas could have redeemed himself. Pageau responds that, narratively, no, Judas could not be redeemed, but ontologically, yes. Peterson responds that Judas's redemption is the same as that for anyone who seeks forgiveness

77. Peterson, *The Gospels*, episode 9, 0:51:00.

78. Peterson, *The Gospels*, episode 3, 0:22:00.

79. Peterson, *The Gospels*, episode 3, 1:54:00.

80. *Sola gratia*, *sola fide*, and *sola scriptura* are the defining characteristics and pillars of the Lutheran Reformation. A person is saved by grace, through faith—in Christ—alone, which is found in Scripture alone.

of sin. Can you be forgiven of sin? Yes. But how great is the atonement? Judas would have needed some major atonement for this sin.⁸¹ Thus, the gospel of being's interpretation of atonement is that in order to receive forgiveness, the atonement must be equal or greater in value. This is like a balancing act. In order to be redeemed, the good must outweigh the evil.

Blackwood disagrees with the interpretation of the gospel of being, however. In an excellent counter to Peterson's claims of following the law of God and orienting one's whole life toward God, Blackwood says no one can measure up to God's righteous demand. It is a person's heart that needs to be perfect. But that is impossible. We cannot keep the standard of the law. We can only go to Jesus who kept the standard.⁸² A person is "always the hypocrite that stands in need of redemption that you cannot get yourself."⁸³ Blackwood correctly teaches here the concept of James 2:10,⁸⁴ Romans 3:23–24⁸⁵ and Ephesians 2:1–9.⁸⁶

Included in the gospel of being's interpretation of salvation is the definition of hell. Is it a place, a state of mind, or something else? Peterson sees hell as both a place and a state of mind, but emphasizes the latter definition. Once again, taking that emphasis coincides with the gospel

81. Peterson, *The Gospels*, episode 8, 1:53:00.

82. Peterson, *The Gospels*, episode 7, 1:09:00.

83. Peterson, *The Gospels*, episode 7, 1:10:00.

84. ¹⁰ For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.

85. ²³ For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

86. ¹ As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ² in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. ³ All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. ⁴ But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵ made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. ⁶ And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, ⁷ in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast.

of being, since the here and now is what is important, and thus orienting upward to the law of God is good. However, when opposition arises for the person due to their orienting upward, then one finds themselves in hell. Peterson's go-to example of this is Auschwitz and the treatment of Jews during the Holocaust. In so many words, Peterson will say that it was hell on earth, where there was absolute evil, and what redeems people from that hell is Logos, truth.⁸⁷

Since hell can be a place on earth in the moment, it should not surprise us that Peterson also says that eternal life can be here and now as well. When discussing the lawyer who asks Jesus in Luke 10:25–37 how he may inherit eternal life, Peterson and Pageau continue with their gospel of being interpretation. Eternal life is often associated with a person's survival and their family. Eternal life is not just what happens when someone dies, but also about living a full life.⁸⁸ Following Peterson's use of hermeneutics, this interpretation would be satisfactory to him since the way one acts in the present will affect what happens later. It is natural to conclude that someone will have "eternal life" now based on what they do. When someone lives fully, their lives fill up with joy and peace, which is an "eternal life."

While Scripture does speak of believers currently possessing eternal life in this world because of what Christ has done, that is not the same eternal life that Peterson speaks about. Because Jesus has forgiven their sins, believers already hold the gift of eternal life as a certain reality, even while they await its full realization. Their "citizenship is in heaven" (Phil 3:20), and when Jesus calls them home, they will fully realize this blessed state. Where the gospel of being errs is not necessarily with the "when" of eternal life, but both the cause of eternal life and what eternal life is: life in the presence of the Father that will never end.

87. Peterson, *The Gospels*, episode 10, 0:49:00.

88. Peterson, *The Gospels*, episode 7, 1:24:00.

In summary, Peterson's soteriology of being corrupts the means of grace, rendering them symbols of our upward-oriented character. Christ's death on the cross is not for the redemption of the whole world. Instead, Christ's death both mirrors and is the pinnacle moment of a person challenged to stand by what they believe in and know is right. By his death, Christ reveals what it means to live fully. Salvation thus is given to those who orient themselves according to the Logos. Salvation is not dependent on a person's faith in Christ. Both believers and unbelievers save themselves if they orient upward. Jesus shows us this orientation perfectly in his life and death. Thus, Jesus, as the perfect archetypal man, is the only way to salvation. Forgiveness depends on the degree of orientation. Eternal life and hell are states of being that we experience in this world.

Peterson's Sanctification of Being

Peterson's gospel of being mischaracterizes Christ by failing to show what he has done for our salvation. The gospel of being disagrees with how God saved people, the nature of faith, and what constitutes eternal life. It naturally follows then that the life of a Christian after the forgiveness of sins would be affected by the gospel of being. It affects not only the life of the believer but also that of the unbeliever. This final section examines how Peterson's gospel of being continues to misinterpret and misrepresent the primary focus of the four gospels, shifting the emphasis away from Christ as Savior to the life of a Christian and the doctrine of sanctification.

As is rightly taught in Luther's Small Catechism and reemphasized in Formula of Concord Articles IV, V, VI, believers alone perform good works acceptable to God.⁸⁹ Good works are not optional for the believer; they are necessary in that they are the fruits of their faith in Christ (John 15:1–17). They give an outward sign of their living faith to others (Jas 2:18). God simultaneously commands believers to do good works (Eph 2:10). They are also not the source, cause, or reason for our salvation (Eph 2:8–9). In no way are works a factor in our justification. Neither are they detrimental to salvation. The good works that Christians do in their lives of sanctification are glorious acts that praise our God (Matt 5:16).

As with denominations that fail to distinguish justification and sanctification, Peterson struggles with this distinction. The gospel of being suggests that a person's works are those that align and orient themselves in accordance with God. Good works are those in which one fully gives everything to this orientation upward to God.⁹⁰ Apart from the different terminology Peterson uses, one can understand and agree with Peterson's analysis of the life of a believer. However, some statements about sanctification should give a Christian pause when examining how this definition by Peterson plays out in a person's life.

Firstly, these good works of orienting one's life upward toward God, sometimes referred to as "the highest good," can be undertaken by believers and unbelievers alike. Both works are acceptable to God, whether or not faith accompanies them.⁹¹ Peterson blurs the distinction between civic righteousness and true good works as defined in Scripture. By eliminating the condition on good works that God gives us in Matthew 7:17–18 and John 15:5, which state that

89. Robert Kolb, Timothy J. Wengert, and Charles P. Arand, *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2000).

90. Peterson, *The Gospels*, episode 8, 0:44:00.

91. Peterson, *The Gospels*, episode 4, 0:48:00.

only believers can do them, Peterson makes good works a key component in the life of the person who is attempting to orient themselves upward. A fully devoted life to this highest good and order of society would be no different than adopting the life of a Buddhist monk, a Hindu priest, or other such lifestyles. As long as the person does these works following the example of the Logos and what God says, then anyone, believer and unbeliever alike, can do good works. When someone works for the betterment of others and society as a whole, it is considered pleasing to God.

A gospel account that Peterson uses to support this interpretation of good works is the story of the woman at the well in Samaria, as recounted in John 4. His take is that this story shows a meta pattern of our everyday reality.⁹² To survive, people need to work together to establish a plentiful supply of water. If a group of people works together to accomplish their goal, they create a plentiful environment. However, if they do not work together, it does not matter how much the group does, because it will still fail. It does not matter how many resources they have, because that is not where their wealth lies. So, too, with this woman. This story, in Peterson's mind, is pointing to something beyond the obvious, and that is the abundance in one's life. What does her abundance, and ours, depend on? The abundance of the world? No. True wealth, being the provision of the living water, is dependent on an ethos—the ethos of self-sacrifice.⁹³ In other words, if we work together for the common good through helping each other, we are showing the self-sacrificial nature of character that is in line with orienting ourselves to God. When one does not help another or when someone works for personal gain, they are not

92. Peterson, *The Gospels*, episode 3, 0:16:00.

93. Peterson, *The Gospels*, episode 3, 0:18:00.

following the Logos and thus are not properly oriented upward. But when someone is self-sacrificial, they, in essence, have and drink the living water of which Jesus speaks.

This self-sacrificing nature also has a psychological impact on the person, Peterson notes. The example he provides relates to when people give to each other. When a person gives generously, they invite others to do the same. Through this system of giving more than one receives, a person will inevitably receive more in return in time. It is like a well that keeps giving. This self-sacrificing ethos can also become corrupt. The corruption will show itself in the person's giving. The once-reciprocal concession of giving and receiving may turn into a compulsion to ask for things in return. This undermines the ethos and transforms it into something undesirable.⁹⁴ Peterson, through his terminology and psychological analysis, describes the concept of a healthy versus an unhealthy Christian community. When Christians love and help each other willingly and joyfully, they build up the body of Christ. However, when Christians take advantage of each other and expect more in return selfishly, then the system begins to fall apart. Because the one person failed to orient himself upward, that is, show a Christ-like love to his neighbor, he harms those around him.

When Prager asked how one can produce good works if those efforts are nothing but filthy rags, Peterson responded that the passage⁹⁵ is a call to give everything one has to everything that they do. It is a full-commitment vocation.⁹⁶ Prager counters by asking them whether God is happier with the unbeliever who does good than with the believer who does not. Sadly, no one gives the correct answer. The best response comes from Dr. Orr and Peterson, who

94. Peterson, *The Gospels*, episode 3, 0:28:00.

95. Isa 64:6.

96. Peterson, *The Gospels*, episode 4, 0:48:00.

mention that performing good works serves as evidence that an individual possesses the Spirit. Alternatively, at the very least, when the person faces upward and attempts to be in line with God, even though they are not a believer, they are still doing good and are God-pleasing. For the believer who does not do good works and yet parades around like they are in line with God, that person is a hypocrite putting on a masquerade. Peterson notes that the works are coming from the Light (Jesus), and the Light shines on the darkness to do good works. A person who has the Word has the Light. Thus, good works are fruits that follow from being in the Light. This is why one should be a Christian, in order to be light for the world, since a believer knows the Light.⁹⁷ Notice then that the emphasis for being a Christian doing good works is simply because a Christian has a clearer picture of what good works look like. A Christian looks to the Light as the example of good. Because of this, God considers an unbeliever's good works as good, but good can be improved upon by knowing the Light.

Secondly, while the believer does good works out of thanks and love for God and what he has done for them, the gospel of being would make the works the *modus operandi qui salute efficit*.⁹⁸ This causation goes contrary to Scripture. As we saw in the gospel of being regarding Christology, the simple message of Ephesians 2:1–10 is corrupted. A message that says people were dead in sin, saved not by works but by God's grace in Christ, and who now, in faith, do good works. According to the gospel of being, good works create a true believer, rather than being the fruits of faith. Similar to the Roman Catholic Church's interpretation, good works are necessary for our salvation in that they contribute to our salvation. The gospel of being could be labeled a form of crass synergism, as works play an integral role in a person's salvation.

97. Peterson, *The Gospels*, episode 4, 0:54:00.

98. Literally "the way of operating that causes salvation."

These works, however, are not done to show how great a person I am in a narcissistic way. Peterson condemns this virtue signaling. Once again, he points to how Jesus approaches his own good works. He notes that when Jesus' reputation grows, and people come flocking to him to touch him and be healed, it was not because Jesus hired a public relations team and advertised his message. Jesus is not doing this in a way that he is waving a flag of virtue, but he sets an example of how to do good and allows the consequences of that good to continue. This is similar to the Lord speaking with Abraham, where he says that if Abraham follows him, good things will follow. Similarly, when Jesus, who is the Logos, performs good works, good things follow. This is because he does the Father's will.⁹⁹

With this view, good works turn from acts of thanksgiving and praise given to God, into chips to cash in. This interpretation has subtle hints of the prosperity gospel that Joel Osteen preaches. In the discussion of Matthew 6:33, when Jesus says, "Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own," Peterson grabs hold of the law as a guide to prosperity. He points to the believer and says that if they do this very thing, they will receive (good things) from God. He uses a child as an example. A child is very narrow-minded and cares only for the here and now, and doesn't worry about the future. If a person drops worry—having this narrow-minded outlook—while orienting themselves upward in a sacrificial way, they will be of benefit to people, and they will likewise receive what they deserve from God for acting in this manner.¹⁰⁰ This is in line with the gospel of

99. Peterson, *The Gospels*, episode 3, 1:20:00.

100. Peterson, *The Gospels*, episode 4, 1:49:00.

being. If works can earn favor from God and others, then, of course, a believer will do good works. Obviously, this is the wrong perspective on good works and why a believer does them.

That's not to say that Peterson's comments about the law have no value. Often, Christians become disillusioned with the description of the role of works. In many sermons, the application of sanctification can feel like a repetitive cliché, such as "Go and do likewise," or "Love others as God loved you." While these statements are biblically accurate, they often lack a personal connection, leaving the listener feeling detached from the actual practice of the faith. This is where Jordan Peterson's perspective becomes eye-opening. Although he approaches the topic through a secular lens, he mitigates this disillusionment by making sanctification a profoundly personal experience. Where traditional preaching might feel vague, Peterson excels by using specific, "hard-hitting" applications of the law. By connecting these biblical principles to individual responsibility, he restores the personal weight that is sometimes missing from the pulpit.

Personally, Peterson's applications of the law condemned my heart as I reflected on my inconsistency and unwillingness to devote everything that I do and say to loving the Lord my God with all my heart, soul, strength, and mind (Luke 10:27). It was a hard use of the law as a mirror. In faith, I certainly do want to adjust my life to praise God with my thoughts and actions. I want to follow and honor God. The theological concept for what Peterson does well is calling people to repentance. He wants people to follow God's law in their lives of sanctification. This reflection on sanctification would rightly amplify how seriously a Christian addresses the fruits of faith in their lives.

A Bible story that allows for reflection on the fruits of faith is the account of the withered fig tree (Matt 21:18–22). The point of the account is to serve as an object lesson for the disciples

and believers of all ages. We are not to be all show and no fruit. Just as a tree produces fruit, so too a Christian does good works. We are reminded of John the Baptist's words: "Produce fruit in keeping with repentance" (Luke 3:8a). This section of Scripture also speaks to the power of prayer. Indeed, the panelists' discussion on this account focuses primarily on prayer and faith. Unfortunately, Peterson leads the discussion in a non-scriptural direction. Peterson notes that if our faith is as high as it can be, with the charisma of our words as an example, then no miracle is beyond us. However, one's faith, words, and actions must be properly oriented upward. Then, nothing is impossible.¹⁰¹ This interpretation, according to the gospel of being, makes good works a power and comfort for believers. "The bigger the dragon, the greater the treasure. When you take on the adversities of life, the greater the adventure and the more profound and lasting is the reward."¹⁰²

Thirdly, the gospel of being influences sanctification in relation to gender roles. Within the last decade, gender ideology and identity have been a hot topic in the political and societal realm. One would expect, then, that Peterson would discuss this. Surprisingly, Peterson and the panelists do not explore this aspect in depth in the series as much as one would expect. Scattered throughout the series are one-liners or side comments about society and community needing to fulfill their responsibilities. It is implied, or stated in passing, that men need to fulfill their roles as leaders and heads of households. When a man follows the Logos's example, he is fulfilling the role of man. This role is crucial for the community to flourish and work together.¹⁰³ This is in contrast to the societal push for breaking down gender roles and making men and women equal.

101. Peterson, *The Gospels*, episode 8, 0:43:00.

102. Peterson, *The Gospels*, episode 2, 1:49:00.

103. Peterson, *The Gospels*, episode 9, 1:00:00.

Peterson and the panelists acknowledged the significance and impact of gender roles on an individual's life and the broader community.

In summary, Peterson's sanctification of being struggles with the same problem that many Christian denominations face today. The gospel of being does not distinguish between justification and sanctification. Both believers and unbelievers can do good works. If someone self-sacrifices for the community and others, they are orienting upward. This self-sacrifice is a full commitment to this lifestyle. When someone becomes corrupt, they are a hypocrite. Jesus is the Light that illumines what good works look like. Jesus is the prime example of a human who does good works. Good works are also the cause for salvation. The gospel of being is thus a form of crass synergism. Although these works are not narcissistic in nature, the goal is that the doer may receive something beneficial in return. As Peterson preaches the law, a Christian will feel the law convicting them. A reevaluation of our motivation and willingness to do good works can be beneficial when listening to Peterson. Finally, sanctification also affects gender roles. The role of a man is thus to be a leader and head, and not what modern society is redefining a man to be.

CONCLUSION

Having examined the hermeneutics employed by Peterson and how it corrupts other doctrines in the Bible, it would be easy to say, “Stay clear of this Bible series entirely.” However, I would not go so far as to say that there is no benefit in watching this series. There are many times when Peterson explains the subject or concept in different terms or from a different angle that someone might not have encountered before. There is much beneficial information to glean from the other panelists’ comments. With the variety of denominations, backgrounds, and current beliefs from the panel, you get a healthy smattering of opinions. In fact, it can be a good practice for one to step outside their own denomination and into another denomination or person’s view to better understand where the person is coming from and thus witness to them. Doing so, however, should be done cautiously and within reason.

When you understand another’s position, you can better minister to them. The Apostle Peter commends this way of witnessing when he says, “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect” (1 Pet 3:15). Since you know Scripture and are witnessing to others, it can be beneficial to have some basic knowledge about the hermeneutics that a person in Peterson’s camp is using and how to witness to the truths of Scripture with such a person. You can easily learn and understand the Petersonian viewpoint by watching this series. It is likely that some in your church have listened to Jordan Peterson’s podcasts and series. Some will have read his books. Thus, in order to appeal and talk in gentleness and respect to such a person, knowing

Peterson's hermeneutics and how that plays out in his interpretation of the four gospels will be helpful.

A person should not overlook the fact that Peterson does not uphold the truth and purity of the Scriptures. He deviates from the clear interpretation of the text. He does not employ the standard meanings of Christian terminology. He favors a psychological and work-righteous oriented view. He takes glory away from God by promoting a synergistic view of salvation. He robs Christ of his glory as the Savior from sin in favor of a Christ who is an example and a leader. He clearly and consistently attacks the doctrine of *sola gratia*. In plain terms, I would reiterate what the Lord says to the false prophets at the time of Jeremiah as a warning for trusting and following what Peterson says on every point of doctrine.

³⁰ “Therefore,” declares the Lord, “I am against the prophets who steal from one another words supposedly from me. ³¹ Yes,” declares the Lord, “I am against the prophets who wag their own tongues and yet declare, ‘The Lord declares.’” ³² Indeed, I am against those who prophesy false dreams,” declares the Lord. “They tell them and lead my people astray with their reckless lies, yet I did not send or appoint them. They do not benefit these people in the least,” declares the Lord (Jer 23:30–32).

A phrase that Peterson mentions, which helps to reinforce this warning, appears at the beginning of the entire series. Peterson says that power is the theme of the Bible.¹⁰⁴ If power is the theme of the Bible, then the redemption story that God gave us in the Bible means nothing. Thankfully, shortly after Peterson's comment, panelist Bishop Robert Barron correctly states that love is the theme of the Bible.¹⁰⁵ This is most certainly true. God's love that he shows to sinners is the theme of the Bible. Christ Jesus shows us love through his life and death.

104. Peterson, *The Gospels*, episode 1, 0:29:00.

105. Peterson, *The Gospels*, episode 1, 0:30:00.

The Caution for Pastors

An emphasis on the law rather than the gospel is an unfortunate aspect of *The Gospels*. The law-driven nature of the series does do its work on the heart. At times, the law will strike the heart properly and prompt one to reevaluate how they are living out their Christian life of sanctification. However, Peterson's interpretation of the Bible according to the gospel of being will have someone want to pause the video, close the application, and scream in frustration that he does not understand fundamental Christian doctrine.

The series will make the pastor reevaluate their preaching of the law and the gospel. As C. F. W. Walther would state repeatedly, one must properly divide law and gospel.¹⁰⁶ As is taught in a Lutheran homiletics class, you preach the people to hell with the law and raise them out of it with the gospel. Because Peterson frames the gospel through a lens of intense personal responsibility—making the gospel into law—pastors must use extreme caution. Properly divide law and gospel all the more clearly. Listeners influenced by this perspective may interpret vague theological commands, even gospel imperatives, as heavy moral burdens. Without a clear explanation of grace, blanket statements risk crushing the individual under the weight of the law. Viewers miss the comfort and sweetness of the gospel entirely.

The series will prompt the pastor to reevaluate their approach to witnessing to someone with this worldview. Due to the differing terminology between Peterson and conservative Lutherans, a proper explanation of terms is necessary, so you don't talk past each other. Understanding the nuances that Peterson presents will be beneficial for witnessing in that your communication will be clearer. A pastor needs to be patient in understanding the individual

106. C. F. W. Walther, *The Proper Distinction of Law and Gospel*, trans. W. H. T. Dau (St. Louis: Concordia, 1986).

whose language and rationale follow Peterson's. It is very secular. It sounds pleasing to the ear. It is also close enough to the truth of Scripture to make people hesitate when you show them the proper interpretation.

Finally, pastors should be aware that this series will challenge how they typically view the gospel accounts according to their Confessional Lutheran interpretation. Often, the common interpretation of well-known parables and stories takes on a modern philosophical and psychological perspective. This shouldn't blindside pastors. They happen. If this whole paper wasn't enough evidence of this fact, here is another example. Peterson's take on Matthew 8, when Jesus walks on water and calms the storm, is that this story teaches that a calm head prevails when the storms of life mount. Practically speaking, when things look gloomy, you look on high, and it will calm the storms of your life.¹⁰⁷

Talking about This with Laity

When discussing this series with your members or community members, it is essential to consider the individual you are speaking with. If the person has not watched this series, you may need to provide more explanation than usual. You may also decide that it is not a can of worms you want to open with them to spare yourself a headache. If the person has watched the series, remember that they are not Jordan Peterson. That individual is not a clone of Peterson and his ideals. They are their own person with their own background, experiences, school of thought, and conclusions based on the series. To place anyone who has watched this series on your

107. Jordan Peterson, "The Ministry Continues," in *The Gospels*, episode 6 (2024), 0:37:00, accessed Dailywire.

blacklist would be unwise. After all, this author watched it and did not conclude that Lutherans have misrepresented the four gospels. Do not be quick to judge the individual solely based on their watching this series.

When presenting Peterson's interpretation as being incorrect in certain areas, tread lightly and do not try to prove or infer that Jordan Peterson personally is a bad person. The point is not to attack Peterson as a person but to point out where his theology is incorrect based on Scripture. Keep the eighth commandment in mind when speaking about Peterson on a personal basis. It's easy to attack a person rather than the ideology and theology that they present. I hope that this point has come through in this paper. Let Scripture defend itself against what someone says about it.

One benefit that the laity would gain from watching the series is that it offers a different vantage point. Hearing someone with a different view will stimulate discussions and clarifications on what exactly the Bible says. It will spur an investigation into doctrine. It will prompt people to delve into Scripture to find the true answer. A lay member would find great benefit in the discussions on how the gospels are not just for people from centuries ago or for the uneducated and lowly, but rather for all people of all social statuses.

On a practical note, if Grandma Tilly came up to you after church on Sunday and asked if you would recommend this series to her, I wouldn't, for a couple of reasons. First, the academic nature of the series lends itself to a younger audience. Even this author found certain terms and niche words difficult to understand and grasp fully. College students will likely gravitate to and relate to it better than someone who may not be as intellectually gifted or someone unfamiliar with the slang of the day.

A Bible class on the series, or on the four gospels in general, would be beneficial for a pastor who has a group of people open to what Peterson is presenting. Much like how one would handle the topic of cults or sects in Christianity, a class on Peterson's various Bible series would allow the pastor to teach and impress on his listeners the correct and faulty views. A pastor would be able to control the discussion and point the people to Christ and what he has done for them as the purpose and essence of the gospels.¹⁰⁸

Talking about This with Pastors

While there is not a vast difference between the way you speak about this series with pastors as compared to laity, one particular emphasis is different. A pastor who has received decent seminary training will likely understand the differences between denominations and interpretations of the Bible better than the average layperson. This is not to say that there are lay people who don't understand the differences. However, a theologically trained pastor will likely pick up on the more minor doctrinal differences faster than the laity. A theologically trained pastor listening to the discussion will easily understand the theological terms or concepts. For example, a pastor would be familiar with the term "hypostatic union" and its application to discussions of Christology.

The doctrines portrayed in this paper are only a smattering of the ways the gospel of being shows itself in this series. More discussion on other doctrines can and should happen. To examine all the fine points of doctrine that Peterson gives would need more work. It wouldn't be

108. If you would like a pre-made Bible class on this series and Peterson's presentation of *The Gospels*, reach out to me for more information.

a surprise if a pastor brought up this series at a conference to address a question of casuistry. It may involve a lay member and how best to administer to such a person. When advising other pastors about Peterson's theology, treat it similarly to how you would explain any difference between Christian denominations. Address the issue, point out from Scripture what the Bible says on the topic, and teach, teach, teach.

The Caution for Laity

To the laity that would watch this series, I would give this encouragement: know your Bible. When listening to an influential individual who speaks with authority, it is easy for a person to fall into the trap of regarding them as a spokesperson for God and not a wolf in sheep's clothing. Test what Peterson says with clear passages of Scripture. Be like the Bereans of the Apostle Paul's day (Acts 17:11).¹⁰⁹ Ask your pastor for clarification on whatever doctrinal issue you have. Your pastor is your spiritual shepherd. He is there for this purpose. He knows what the Bible says and will show you from God's Word why it is what we believe.

A redeeming light throughout the series is the conservative Christian panelist, Stephen Blackwood. His interpretations throughout the series are the most biblically accurate and correct. Unfortunately, Blackwood speaks infrequently, sometimes only once in an entire two-hour episode. But when he does speak, it is often pure gold. When discussing the Scriptures, Blackwood describes them as "beautiful," and the "glimmer in his eyes." This is because the principles in the Bible are said in the most profound and beautiful ways. The reason the words

109. ¹¹ Now the Berean Jews were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.

have such weight is that they show that God can work in our lives, even now, in all our sin and brokenness, and in every moment.¹¹⁰ Listen to him when he speaks. Blackwood will bring the discussion back on track to the true interpretation of the text. But he is also fallible. He does make mistakes as well.

Ultimately, the laity *could* watch this series and be perfectly content with it, but I would *highly recommend* that they shouldn't. I could loosely recommend a group of Christians watching this if there is a theologically strong leader to keep people on track and help them discern the mixture of truth and error. That could be in a formal Bible study, in which Peterson's commentary is dissected and analyzed. It could also be a more informal group that gets together on its own. The point is that if you watch this with other Christians, and in particular strong Christians who know their Bible, you will pick up the errors in the series more easily. Would I want my daughter to watch it on her own? No. Would I want high school students to watch it? Not without an experienced and spiritually aware believer. Can a college student watch it? Many have probably already seen clips of it on social media, depending on their algorithm.

While watching this series on your own or with a small group might be convenient, remember that your pastor's role as spiritual shepherd is to help you with this sort of spiritual guidance. He is aware of the errors and what the Bible teaches. Granted, he would need to have watched this series and be familiar with its content to address the specific issues mentioned. This doesn't mean your pastor can't benefit you. It is similar to discussing another Christian denomination with him. He may not know every little thing they teach and preach, but he knows the major issues and what the Bible says. Much like attending a church that openly teaches

110. Peterson, *The Gospels*, episode 7, 1:40:00.

falsehoods affects you, so also listening to a series that teaches falsehoods would affect your spiritual health.

Further Research to Be Done

Besides the doctrinal issues mentioned in this paper that you should be aware of, there are other issues to watch for that I didn't discuss, including faith, prayer, angels and demons, and certain interpretations from Peterson's Genesis and Exodus series. Areas from the Genesis lectures and the Exodus series that Peterson incorporates into this series include the call of Abraham, Jacob's ladder, the significance of the Exodus, and the life of Moses. This paper focuses on *The Gospels* and not all his biblical work. However, the main issues described in this paper also apply to his other Bible series. The other series likewise promote the same gospel of being. So, beware of the gospel of being that Jordan Peterson presents. Do not seek out interpretations that go beyond the clear and simple meaning of the text. Finally, pray for help and guidance from the Holy Spirit as you study and learn from Scripture.

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APPENDIX 1: *THE GOSPELS* SIMPLIFIED OUTLINE

The following is a simplified “expanded” outline of *The Gospels*. Designed for ease of use, this outline guides viewers through the series and simplifies the search for specific content. It does not cover every discussion, but a smattering of important information, such as 1) sections of Scripture talked about, 2) some main themes or topics discussed, and 3) helpful or interesting information.

Special note: References to Scripture are not exact in the series. Since Peterson uses *The Single Gospel*, which combines the four gospels, some of the references he uses may not be accurate and may seem unusual or out of place. The references in this outline are corrections to what the docuseries displays when Peterson reads Scripture. Where there are commonalities between the Synoptic Gospels, the default text used in the series is generally Matthew, sometimes to the exclusion of the other accounts.

- I. Episode 1: Birth—Youth—Baptism
 - A. Introduction
 - 1. Previous works and *The Gospels*
 - 2. Introduction of panelists
 - B. The Foundation of the Four Gospels
 - 1. Themes of the Bible
 - 2. The Logos (John 1:1–3)
 - 3. Connection to Genesis 1–2
 - 4. Christianity and science
 - C. Announcements
 - 1. Zechariah (Luke 1:5–25)
 - a. John the forerunner
 - b. John’s baptism
 - (1) Jesus’s baptism is mentioned
 - (2) For forgiveness of sins
 - 2. Mary (Luke 1:26–38)
 - a. A mother’s role
 - b. Is her son divine?

- 3. Joseph (Matt 1:18b–25a)
 - a. A father's role
 - b. Jesus's father
- D. The Christmas Story (Matt 1:18a; Luke 2:1–20)
 - 1. The perfect time for Jesus
 - 2. Announcement to shepherds
 - 3. Simeon, Anna, Magi, flight to Egypt (Matt 2:1–18; Luke 2:22–40)
- E. Childhood
 - 1. Boy Jesus in the Temple (Luke 2:41–52)
 - 2. Final comments
- F. Epilogue
 - 1. Thank you
 - 2. Cuts scene: The four distinct gospels

II. Episode 2: The Beginning of the Ministry

- A. Introduction
 - 1. Cuts scene: “This is some of the best literature ever”
 - 2. First question
- B. The Ministry
 - 1. Readings
 - a. Boy Jesus in the Temple (Luke 2:41–52)
 - b. John the Baptist in the desert (Mark 1:1–6)
 - c. John's subordination to Christ (Matt 3:11–12; Mark 1:7–8; Luke 3:15–18; John 1:9–28)
 - 2. The Baptism of Jesus (Matt 3:13–17; Mark 1:9–11; Luke 3:21–22)
 - a. Unity of heaven and earth
 - b. What is happening and why
 - 3. Jesus Tempted by the Devil (Matt 4:1–11)
 - a. Temptation of bread, at the Temple, and of the world
 - b. Jesus as a leader
 - 4. Jesus's First Miracle
 - a. Cuts scene: A look at the gospels with fresh eyes
 - b. The wedding at Cana (John 2:1–11)
 - c. Cuts scene: Saving the best wine till now explanation
 - 5. Nicodemus Comes to Jesus (John 3:1–21)
 - a. Baptism discussion again; the call to discipleship
 - b. Nicodemus is not a true believer
- C. Epilogue
 - 1. Thank you
 - 2. Cuts scene: The three temptations

III. Episode 3: Miracles

A. Introduction

1. Cutscene: How this series came about
2. Welcome back

B. Beginnings

1. John the Baptist and Herod the Tetrarch (Matt 14:3–5)
2. Jesus and the woman at the well in Samaria (John 4:4–44)
 - a. Meta-pattern of the world; connection to Prov
 - b. Jesus, the living water

C. Miracles

1. Jesus's miracle reputation (Luke 4:14–15)
2. Jesus's healing miracles (John 4:46–54)
3. Jesus heals Peter's mother-in-law and the demon-possessed (Matt 8:14–17)
4. Cutscene: On miracles
5. Jesus heals the leper (Matt 8:2–4)
6. The phenomenological reality of miracles
 - a. Significance for us
 - b. Cutscene: Judas
 - c. Rituals and morals
7. Jesus's reputation grows (Matt 12:15–21)
 - a. Jesus is not narcissistic
 - b. Control of information
8. Jesus raises the widow of Nain's son (Luke 7:11–17)
9. The women support Jesus (Luke 8:1–3)
10. Jesus sends out the Legion (Matt 8:28–34)
11. Pray that the Lord of the harvest send workers (Matt 9:35–38)
12. Jesus sends out the disciples (Matt 10:5–11:1)
13. Cutscene: Biblical criticism
14. Jesus and the catch of fish (Luke 5:1–11)
15. God the Father blesses his children (Matt 7:9–11)
16. Good fish and bad fish (Matt 13:47–50)
17. Discussion on vocation

D. Epilogue

1. Setting the stage for the Sermon on the Mount
2. Thank you
3. Cutscene: The catch of fish

IV. Episode 4: The Sermon on the Mount

A. Introduction

1. Cutscene: Jesus following the threads from Genesis
2. Introduction to the Sermon on the Mount
 - a. What does this sermon mean?
 - b. What is the law?
 - c. What are the beatitudes?

B. The Sermon on the Mount

1. Introduction (Matt 5:1–2)
2. The Beatitudes (Matt 5:3–12)
3. Cutscene: The gospels are useful for the meaning of life
4. Salt loses saltiness (Matt 5:13–16)
5. Not to abolish Law and Prophets (Matt 5:17–26)
6. Cutscene: Christ is the example for a way of life
7. Adultery and lust (Matt 5:27–32)
8. Love your enemies (Matt 5:33–48)
9. Prayer (Matt 6:5–14)
 - a. How to love your enemy
 - b. Is love cheapened?
10. Worry (Matt 6:19–32)
11. Seek God's kingdom (Matt 6:33–34)

C. Epilogue

1. Thank you
2. Cutscene: Jesus fulfills the law, but the moral law remains

V. Episode 5: Parables

A. Introduction

1. Cutscene: Stories vs. facts
2. Introduction to Parables
 - a. Definition
 - b. Importance

B. Parables

1. Sower and the seed (Matt 13:3–23)
2. Cutscene: On parables
3. The weeds (Matt 13:24–30)
4. Cutscene: Parables are an enduring set of principles on display
5. New wine in old wineskins (Luke 5:26–39)
6. Treasure and pearl in the field (Matt 13:44–53)
7. Cutscene: On parables working on people
8. Rich fool (Luke 12:13–21, 31–34)
 - a. Possessions
 - b. Sacrificial process
9. Accountability (Matt 24:45–51)
10. Shrewd manager (Luke 16:1–15)
11. Calling out the Pharisees (Luke 16:16–31)
12. Talents (Matt 25:14–30)
13. Jesus the true vine (Matt 26:30; Mark 14:26; Luke 22:39; John 15:1–16)

C. Epilogue

1. Thank you
2. Cutscene: Struggling with parables

VI. Episode 6: The Ministry Continues

A. Introduction

1. Cutscene: Hearing the gospels anew
2. Welcome back

B. The Ministry Continues

1. The sick need a doctor (Matt 9:10–13)
2. Take Jesus's yoke upon you (Matt 11:28–30)
3. The beheading of John the Baptist (Matt 14:6–13a)
4. Jesus walks on water (Matt 8:18, 23–27)
5. Herod's suspicion of John's resurrection (Matt 14:1–2)
6. The people attempt to make Jesus king (Matt 14:22–23)
7. Cutscene: The gospels are not just a biography
8. Bread of Life discourse (John 6:22–59)
9. Jesus asks the disciples if they will turn away (John 6:60–71)
10. Jesus predicts his death (Matt 16:21–28)
11. Transfiguration (Matt 18:1–8)
12. Prayer (Luke 11:1–2a, 5–13)

C. Epilogue

1. Thank you
2. Cutscene: The Lord's Prayer

VII. Episode 7: Conflict with Authority

A. Introduction

1. Cutscene: Studying religion with Christians and non-Christians
2. Introduction to Conflict
 - a. The reality of conflict
 - b. New panelist introduction
 - c. Cutscene: on Konstantin
 - d. Review of the authorities in the gospels

B. The Conflict(s)

1. Jesus's mother and siblings (Matt 12:46–50)
2. Healing on the Sabbath: Pool at Bethesda (John 5:1–18)
3. Disciples pluck grain on Sabbath (Matt 12:1–8)
4. Healing on the Sabbath: Withered hand (Matt 12:9–14)
5. Disciples eat without washing hands (Matt 15:1–20)
6. How do I inherit eternal life? (Luke 10:25–37)
7. Jesus heals a man born blind (John 9:1–41)
8. Caiaphas: Better for one to die (John 11:45–54)
9. Pay taxes to Caesar (Matt 22:15–22)
10. Cutscene: Summarizing the conflicts
11. Woe to those who reject Jesus (Matt 23:1–36)

C. Epilogue

1. Thank you
2. Cutscene: Recovering the world using the Word

VIII. Episode 8: Holy Week and the Last Supper

A. Introduction

1. Cutscene: How to interpret the text
2. Recap of the series
3. Preamble discussion

B. Holy Week

1. Jesus rides into Jerusalem (Matt 21:1–11)
2. Jesus curses the fig tree (Matt 21:18–19)
3. “Father, bring glory to thy name” (John 12:20–36)
4. Cutscene: On the fig tree
5. Disciples see the fig tree (Matt 21:20–22)
6. Sadducees ask about the resurrection (Matt 22:23–33)
7. The sheep and goats at judgment (Matt 25:31–46)
8. Jesus predicts his betrayal (Matt 26:1–5)
9. Judas goes to betray Jesus (Matt 26:14–16)
10. Preparation for the Last Supper (Matt 26:17–20)

C. Epilogue

1. Thank you
2. Cutscene: Patterns of the gospel story and man’s stories

IX. Episode 9: Betrayal and Trial

A. Introduction

1. Cutscene: Gethsemane and Jesus’s humanity
2. Welcome back

B. The Lord’s Supper

1. Jesus washes the disciples’ feet (Luke 22:14–30)
2. Jesus gives the bread to Judas (Matt 26:21–25)
3. Jesus institutes the Lord’s Supper (Matt 26:26–29)
4. Peter’s vow to die for Jesus (Matt 26:31–35)
5. Cutscene: Jesus takes all sin to the cross
6. In my Father’s house (John 14:1–15)
7. Jesus will send the Holy Spirit (John 14:16–31)

C. Gethsemane and Arrest

1. Prayer at Gethsemane (Matt 26:36–46)
2. Jesus arrested (Matt 26:47–56)
3. Cutscene: Transforming from suffering
4. Jesus before Annas (Matt 26:57a; John 18:13–14, 19–24)
5. Peter in the courtyard (Matt 26:58)
6. False accusations (Matt 26:57b, 59–68)
7. Peter denies Jesus (Matt 26:69–75)
8. Jesus is condemned to death (Matt 27:1–2)
9. Judas hangs himself (Matt 27:3–10)
10. Cutscene: On crucifixion and Jesus’s burial

D. Pilate and Condemnation

1. Jesus before Pilate (Matt 27:11–14)
2. Jesus before Herod (Luke 23:8–12)
3. Pilate's wife/Pilate again (Matt 27:19)
4. Pilate releases Barabbas (Matt 27:15–18, 20–26)
5. Jesus beaten (Matt 27:27–30)
6. Jesus brought out (Matt 27:31)

E. Epilogue

1. Thank you
2. Cutscene: Irony and paradox of the cross

X. Episode 10: Crucifixion and Resurrection

A. Introduction

1. Cutscene: Meaning of the resurrection
2. Recap of previous events

B. Crucifixion

1. Simon carries the cross (Matt 27:32)
2. Seven Last Words and crucifixion details (Matt 27:33–34, 37–38)
3. Divide garments and insults (Matt 27:35–36, 39–44)
4. Cutscene: God gives mercy from the cross
5. Mary and John; Jesus dies (Matt 27:45–56)
6. Jesus buried (Matt 27:57–61)
7. Seal the tomb (Matt 27:62–66)
8. Women prepare (Mark 16:1)

C. Resurrection

1. Women at the tomb (Matt 28:1–8)
2. Two disciples at the tomb (Luke 24:12)
3. Cutscene: The resurrection is not a myth or legend
4. Cutscene: The resurrection is the pivotal moment
5. Mary Magdalene at the tomb (Matt 28:9–10)
6. Emmaus disciples (Mark 16:12–13)
7. Jesus appears to the disciples (Luke 24:36–43; Mark 16:14)
8. Cutscene: Bridging the gap for the unbeliever
9. Jesus appears to different groups (Acts 1:3)
10. Jesus appears to Thomas (John 20:24–29)
11. Cutscene: The story moves toward faith
12. Jesus reinstates Peter (Matt 28:16a)
13. The Great Commission (Matt 28:16b–20a)

D. Ascension

1. Jesus promises the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49–50)
2. Jesus ascends (Acts 1:9–12; Mark 16:19)
3. Pentecost (Acts 2:1–4; Mark 16:20a)
4. Purpose of the writing (John 20:30–31)

E. Epilogue

1. Closing statements from panelists
2. Cutscene: This is only the beginning of the discussion

APPENDIX 2: PETERSON'S THEOLOGICAL TERMS

The following is an abridged and edited AI summary of theological terms used by Jordan Peterson, based entirely on Parker Settecase's article, as found in the bibliography. For a more in-depth understanding, check out Settecase's article. The terms have been rearranged into alphabetical order and do not follow the order in the article.

Consummation: The potential establishment of “true paradise” on earth, achieved through humanity's collective embodiment of the Archetypal Hero (Logos)—where individuals confront chaos, bring their own houses into perfect order, and continuously transform the tragic realities of existence into a sustaining and productive world.

Creation: The mythological projection of the human psyche and its underlying neurobiological structure onto reality and history. The Genesis account is thus a projection that reflects the fundamental duality of the human brain (order: the known and chaos: the unknown).

Fall: The mythological representation of the dramatic, evolutionary emergence of human self-consciousness—a non-historical event that irreversibly altered human experience by introducing awareness of vulnerability, limitation, and fear.

God the Demythologizer: Not a description of God's nature, but rather a characterization of the biblical author's unique literary and theological method when using ancient Near Eastern motifs. The theological process by which the biblical narrative transforms and subverts pagan mythological concepts to assert the absolute sovereignty, transcendence, and power of the Israelite God.

Myth: A narrative vehicle for meaning, value, and action that provides wisdom about what should be done in the world. It is a counterpoint to science that is equally valid for knowledge, not a lesser science.

Peterson the Demythologizer: A label applied to Peterson's methodology, which strips myths, including Christian doctrine, of their objective, transcendent veracity by reducing them to mere epiphenomenal byproducts of human neurobiology and psychological projection. In other words, the gospel of being.

Redemption: The heroic archetypal process of continually confronting and integrating chaos to generate new order and advance human flourishing. The central figure is embodied by Christ Jesus, who is not a divine person of the Trinity, but the Logos, the projection of the Archetypal Hero.

Revelation: The emergence and translation of implicit moral knowledge—derived from the collective behavioral history of humanity—into explicit, abstract semantic form.¹¹¹

111. Text generated by Gemini, Google, November 11, 2025. Edited and adapted for clarity and understanding.