

# **Dr. Robert A. Peterson, Revelation and Scripture, Session 13, Special Revelation in the New Testament, Incarnation, Paul, Introduction, Love, Righteousness, Wisdom, Hebrews, Revealer, Power**

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This is Dr. Robert A. Peterson in his teaching on Revelation and Holy Scripture. This is session 13, Special Revelation in the New Testament, Incarnation, Paul, Introduction, Love, Righteousness, Wisdom, Hebrews, Revealer, Power.

Let us pray. Gracious Father, thank you for revealing yourself to us in your Son and in your Word, which tells us about him. Help us to read the Gospels, to learn of Jesus as our Lord and Savior, as our example, but also as the one who reveals you as never before. Bless us and our families, we pray, in Jesus' holy name. Amen.

We've looked at Special Revelation in the Incarnation in John and Paul, I mean in John, and now we want to do so in Paul and the letter to the Hebrews. Colossians 1:15 will get us going because of the way it refers to the Son of God.

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him, all things were created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities. All things were created through him and for him, Colossians 1:17. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, and in everything, he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

The very first words are our great concern right now. He is the icon, the image of God, the invisible one. He's the image of the invisible God.

If one would want to know God, if one would want to learn about God, one should look into the face of the incarnate Son of God, because he is the very visible representation of the invisible God. He's the very invisible God made visible exactly in the incarnation, in the Son's taking true humanity to himself. He's the image of God.

And as such, he images God. He reveals God. He reveals many of God's attributes.

We will just look at a few of them. He reveals God's love, Romans 5:6 through 8. This is a wonderful assurance passage. Paul bases assurance on three things.

Said better, God assures us in three ways. He promises in his word to keep saving those whom he saves. He gives his spirit to them to work in their hearts, to assure them.

And he works in their lives, in our lives, to assure us by convicting us of sin, by leading us in righteousness, by stimulating our faith, by producing the fruit of the spirit in our lives. In Romans 5:1 through 11, these three ways God assures us are brought together. God assures us, I'll do them in reverse.

God assures us by working in our lives. We see this in verse 3. Not only do we now rejoice in the hope of the glory of God because of God's word and promises, but not only that, Romans 5:3, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope. And hope does not put us to shame because God's love has been poured out into our hearts.

I can't help. I can't stop there. Through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us, there's another way God assures us, by the spirit in our hearts. But the first way I want to show that is the third of the three ways, by the word, by the spirit, by changing our lives, is by changing our lives.

We not only rejoice in the hope of God's glory based upon his promises and his word but also because of how he works in our lives. It is possible, he says; in fact, he views it as the normal Christian life to rejoice in sufferings because union with Christ involves union with his death and resurrection. Union with his death involves, among other things, suffering now.

Union, with his resurrection, involves glory later. We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering, rightly responded to, produces endurance. All suffering doesn't produce endurance.

But God's people who suffer according to the will of God, looking to God, trusting God, relying on God's Spirit, learn steadiness, steadfastness, endurance, and perseverance as they respond again and again in their sufferings with faith, with trust in the Lord. Suffering produces endurance. Endurance produces character.

If a believer responds in a godly way to suffering, over and over again, she learns endurance or steadiness, and eventually, that steadiness makes her into a steady or reliable person. This is the logic behind Paul's words. We rejoice in our sufferings knowing that suffering, rightly responded to, produces endurance.

And if we hang in there long enough, endurance produces character. And we need to try to understand his thoughts here a little, with some guesswork, but I don't think it's too hard. And character produces hope.

You see, I get this part. Suffering, rightly related to, brings endurance. Enduring over enough period of time in the Lord brings steadfast character.

I get that part. But how does that breed hope? Paul's thought seems to be that Douglas Moo agrees with me in his commentary on Romans, that seeing God at work now in our lives breeds hope for the future that we cannot see. Watching God work now increases our hope for the future that we cannot see.

We rejoice even in our sufferings, in a sense, because suffering produces endurance, endurance produces character, and character produces hope. Trusting God for what we can see increases our hope that he will fulfill his promises for what we cannot see. That is future glory.

And this hope does not put us to shame, as some hopes do, false hopes, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. Three ways God assures us, by his word, by his spirit, by changing our lives, having seen him working in our lives in Romans 5:3, and 4, we now see in Romans 5:5, the second way he assures us, the textus classicus is Romans 8, 16, that says, the Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God. The spirit himself, the Holy Spirit, bears witness with our human spirit that we are children of God.

Here, God, the Father, tells us of his love. He communicates his love to us internally by the spirit. He pours out his love into our hearts by giving us the Holy Spirit in salvation.

But there's a third way, and as a matter of fact, the most basic way, the most important way. Oh, God assures us three ways of salvation. Praise the Lord.

We'll take all the assurance we can get. So, we do rejoice when he works in our lives, including when he convicts us of sin. We do rejoice in the inner witness of the spirit.

But we don't divorce any of that from the word. And in fact, the word is paramount, because it is more objective than the other two. If somebody gets sick enough or discouraged enough or is in certain terrible circumstances, they may not feel the spirit.

And at times, every believer has almost despaired of their love. Dear Lord, what's going on inside of me? Am I even a Christian man, thinking these thoughts, letting this fire come out of my mouth, committing these sins like that? It's not the normal

Christian experience, but probably most of us can relate to it. But God does assure us by working in our lives.

And I, 1 John 1:8 to 10, including convicting us of sin. It's a good work of God. And he does testify to us internally by his spirit.

But more important than those two, and basic to those two, is his promises in his word to keep his people. And those promises to save and keep build our assurance. Okay? Verses 6 through 8 are an example of those promises.

Actually, verses 1 and 2 are the same. But so as not to do a complete exegesis of Romans 6 through 8, while we were weak, at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person.

Though perhaps for a good person, one would even dare to die. It's not unheard of. It is unusual.

But especially in the context of the service of one's country, we learn of somebody who gives his life, throwing himself on the hand grenade, taking the explosion, killing him, and giving his life for the sake of his buddies. But God chose his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. This is remarkable.

The greatest way God assures us is by his word. He loved us when we were sinners. He saved us.

He will surely keep us saved. He promises to keep us saved. There's great assurance in God's word.

As a matter of fact, the verses that follow basically say, if when we were condemned, God justified us, now that he's justified us, he'll keep us saved. Verses 9 and 10 basically say if when we were enemies, God reconciled us to himself, now that he has reconciled us, he'll keep us saved. He'll spare us from his wrath.

You see, in this wonderful exposition of assurance, God reveals his love for us through his son. Oh my, what amazing love this is. Christ died for the ungodly, for the weak, for sinners, that we might be saved.

The incarnation reveals the love of God as never before. 1 John says, in chapter 4, that this is love, not that we love God, but that he loved us and gave his son to be the propitiation for our sins. This takes us to Romans 3, 25, 26, which is the main place we find propitiation in the New Testament.

It occurs four times, but this is the major time. This is the main exposition of it. It's found twice there in 1 John 4, it's found in Hebrews 2:17, but the main place is Romans 3:25 and 26.

Picking up on what I said earlier in these lectures, in Romans 1.16 and 17, Paul gave his thematic statement for Romans. The theme is the revelation of the saving righteousness of God. But 1:18 doesn't immediately pursue that theme.

Oh, it does, but indirectly, for it speaks of the revelation of something else, God's wrath from heaven against the ungodliness and unrighteousness of human beings. That theme, the revelation of God's wrath, is a topical summary from 1.18 through 3:20. In 3:21, having sufficiently humbled the world before God and showing that every human being is a sinner under God's wrath in need of God's grace for salvation. In 3:21, he returns to the theme of 1.16 and 17 and says, but now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although witnessed to by the law and the prophets.

The righteousness of God through faith in Christ for all who believe. And Paul explains this righteousness, this saving righteousness in the verses that follow. There's no distinction, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

And they're justified by his grace as a gift through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. There are two pictures of the atonement in these verses. The first one is redemption.

Paul does not give us more details here, but to quickly summarize, redemption involves the state of bondage out of which God purchases us with the purchase price of the blood, the sacrificial death of the Son of God. And the result is a consequent state of liberty. Leon Morris, in his apostolic preaching on the cross, shows well.

Redemption involves three stages. Bondage, spiritual bondage, ransom price, the death of Christ, resultant freedom of the children of God. John Stott, in the cross of Christ, adds a fourth theme to this, and that is, we belong to him who purchased us.

We are not our own. We were bought with a price, as we see in the end of 1 Corinthians 6. So, Paul does not explore redemption, he simply mentions it. Rather, he explores another theme, and that is of atonement, and that is propitiation.

Christ Jesus, Romans 3.24, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

To make a long story short, Paul teaches that the cross of Christ reveals the love of God as never before. Romans 5:6-8, God demonstrates his own love for us in this. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

But the cross of Christ also demonstrates the justice of God, and we find that in these propitiation texts, especially this one, the major one. Paul says God passed over in his divine forbearance former sins in verse 25 of Romans 3. That is, through the sacrificial system, true worshippers were forgiven by God through the death of the animal, and their faith that God would forgive based upon that sacrifice, but the blood of bulls and goats, Hebrews tells us, doesn't really make final atonement for sin. And so God, with each of those sacrifices as it were, was writing IOUs to himself.

He needed to settle affairs, he needed to deal with his own justice, and as a matter of fact, that's what he did on the cross of Christ, and that is called propitiation. God's justice was satisfied in the work of Christ, who bore the wrath of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in himself as the God-man, suffering the pains of hell, because he was God and man in a finite period of time, he could suffer the true equivalent of eternal punishment to save everyone who would believe in him. Lost persons sometimes think, huh, God will just save everybody. He's a God of love.

For God not to save everybody, there'd be something wrong with him. It's a total misunderstanding of the character of God because the biblical problem is not how a God of love condemns anybody; if we read three chapters of the Bible or three chapters of Romans, he could condemn everybody and be as loving as he always was. The problem is, how can he maintain his justice and save anybody, whether it be Adam and Eve or the Jews and Gentiles, that Paul says are under God's wrath, from 3:18, from 1:18 to 3:20 of Romans.

The answer is, that the cross of Christ, not only is the greatest revelation of the love of God, but it is also the greatest revelation of the justice of God because the cross of Christ enabled God to maintain his own moral integrity, his justice, and to justly save anyone who believes in Jesus. The cross was to show God's righteousness at the present time, verse 26, that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. Amazingly, miraculously, God saves sinners and does not lower his standard of salvation because Christ meets that standard.

His perfect righteousness is imputed to our spiritual bank accounts, 2 Corinthians 5:21, and our sins are imputed to him who loved us and gave himself for us. Not only does Christ, in his death and resurrection, reveal God's love. Hence the incarnation is revelatory, it is special revelation indeed, Romans 5:6-8, not only does the death and resurrection of Christ reveal the justice of God, the incarnation is special revelation indeed, Romans 3:25-26, but the incarnation and the person and work of Christ that follow it reveal the wisdom of God in a superlative way, Ephesians 1:7-10. Paul writes, and all of this is worthy of attention, but we just can't look at every verse.

Paul speaks of the praise of God's glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved, a reference to the Son of God, in him we have redemption through his blood, there's that deliverance Paul spoke of in Romans 3, just before propitiation, the forgiveness of trespasses, our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us in all wisdom and insight, making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven, and things on earth. It's a remarkable statement that the cross not only reveals the love and justice of God but also the singular wisdom of God in fulfilling his plan.

Now, this plan was in the Old Testament; it is not absolutely lacking, as Romans tell us, near the end. Romans 15 tells us, sorry, Romans 16, that him who is able to strengthen you, last couple of verses in Romans, according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, here's that idea again, which was kept secret for long ages, but has now been disclosed, and through the prophetic writings, see it was there in the writings, it just wasn't made manifest until the Spirit was poured out on Pentecost until the Christ has come, and then the Spirit came in newness and power, but has now been disclosed, and through the prophetic writings, has been made known to all the nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith, through the only wise God, be glory forevermore, through Jesus Christ, amen.

Paul speaks of the mystery, and it's only revealed in New Testament times, in Christ and the Spirit, but it is in the prophetic writings. It just needed to be laid bare; it needed to be revealed, and that's what we're talking about: the special revelation in the incarnation of the Son of God. Paul speaks of this mystery in Ephesians 1, in Christ's redemptive blood, violent death, we have forgiveness, this is according to the riches of God's grace, that which grace God lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight, making known to us the mystery of His will, that is to include Jews and Gentiles in the body of Christ, according to His purpose, God's will, God's purpose, God's mystery, it is His wisdom to reveal those things in Christ, and He uses the word plan, according to His purpose, which He set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time, what is that plan? To unite all things in Him, things in heaven, and things on earth, it was God's plan, in the prophetic writings of the Old Testament, but fully manifested in the New by the Spirit of Pentecost, that the crucified, risen, ascended, glorified Christ poured out, to show not only that God would save individuals by Jesus' death and resurrection, not only would He save the church by Jesus' death and resurrection, but that He would restore the fallen creation by Jesus' death and resurrection.

We're not going to turn, but in Romans 8, it is under the picture of redemption; the redemption of believers is the microcosm of the macrocosm of the redemption of the creation, which longs for redemption, and here, the reconciliation of believers, even those at Ephesus, is the microcosm of the macrocosm of the reconciliation of

the heavens and the earth, which is according to the work of Christ, what a work it was. It not only made valid all those Old Testament sacrifices. We're not saying everybody was saved who sacrificed, who brought a sacrifice, but those who sincerely brought a sacrifice to the priests of Yahweh, following His pattern, were, because the death of Christ, Hebrews 9.15, made those sacrifices valid. God brought forgiveness even through them, and He fully settled matters and made propitiation, Romans 3:5.26, in the first century, in the death of His Son.

But God's plan was also to save, to redeem, to reconcile, to renew the creation. The Bible begins with the creation of the heavens and the earth. It ends with the new heavens and new earth, and how that comes about is through the death and resurrection of the Son of God, as amazing as the work of Christ is.

Not only John but Paul bears witness to the special revelation of God in the incarnation of His Son. We'll just take a glimpse at Hebrews, which does the same. Hebrews 1 is a gorgeous portion of God's Word.

Hebrews is an amazing book. It is a literary and theological masterpiece, and I might say it is a theological masterpiece as well. I know of no better place to show the offices of Christ, prophet, priest, and king, in that order than Hebrews 1. Hebrews 1:2, prophet.

Hebrews 1:3, priest. Hebrews 1 as a whole is about the coronation of the Son of God, who, after His death, resurrection, and ascension, sat down at the right hand of God, of the majesty in heaven. That's His session, His sitting down.

That's what it's about, and as it talks about that, it gives the three offices, prophet, priest, and king, Old Testament historical offices that were types, prophecies enacted, sometimes occupied by unworthy people, but still, God foretold that one would come, and He would combine the offices of prophet, priest, and king in one person, even His beloved Son. But the first thing in terms of the unfolding context that Hebrews 1 is about is the superiority of New Testament revelation to Old Testament revelation because New Testament revelation came about through not the prophets, but through the Son. As a matter of fact, the references to angels, which are much more numerous than prophets in Hebrews 1, that references to angels goes with the references to prophets, as we see in Hebrews 2:2 where it speaks of the message declared by angels.

That is the law, as Paul says in Galatians 3, as twice in Acts 7, Peter says, I keep doing these quotations without knowing where I'm going exactly, Galatians 3:19. In other words, the message of Hebrews 1 is the Son, as the mediator of the New Testament revelation, is superior to the mediators of Old Testament revelation, the prophets and angels. Once again, 2:2 specifically talks about the message declared by angels.



Galatians 3:19 shows that is the Mosaic law. Deuteronomy has some myriads and myriads on the mountain at the giving of the law. And twice in Acts 7, I'm not going to try to run those references down.

Peter talks about angels, the law being given through angels. Jesus is thus the revealer. Again, the incarnation reveals God as never before.

As a matter of fact, the beautiful images of him as the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature. Actually, they each show three tell three truths, but the major truth of both of them in the context is Jesus is the great revealer of God. When it says he's a radiance of the glory of God, it's talking about the sun in the sky, and it's picturing the sun setting forth rays, or in this case, one ray, one radiance, one effulgence or shining forth.

The son of God is called the radiance, the shining forth of the S U N, which is the glory of God. What does that show? Three things. The ray is part of the sun prolonged into space.

It shows the deity of Christ. He's the radiance of God in that he is God revealed incarnate. There's also a distinction between the sun and the ray.

The sun is not all prolonged, but the rays are. Hence, there's a distinction between the father and the son if you will, but mostly in context, the radiance is what brings the invisible sun invisible. If you stare at it, you go blind in that sense, invisible to our eyes.

That is the son of God, who reveals the invisible father. He is the radiance of the glory of God. The exact same meaning as Colossians 1:15.

The image of the invisible God has the same meaning as in John 1. No man has ever seen God, the unique God who is in the bosom of the Father, who's on the side of the Father. He has revealed him.

I marvel. I taught in the evening school from the English Bible, Gospel of John, Romans, and Hebrews over and over and over. And just as I just shared those three different ways of saying the same thing, I marveled in the unity of Holy Scripture.

John, Paul, and the writer of the Hebrews have very different vocabularies, images, and ways of expressing themselves. But the same truth is given in John 1:18, Colossians 1:15, and Hebrews 1:3. As a matter of fact, it's given twice. The first image is the ray being shot out from the sun to reveal the sun.

Even so, the S O N of God is the mediator of New Testament revelation, far superior to the angels and prophets who brought Old Testament revelation. The other images

are of the making of coins. The sun is the exact imprint of God's nature in the ancient world.

First-century times, a malleable metal would be put into a die and banged with something like a hammer, and it would bear that image. The same three things are revealed. The denarius coin reveals the image of the denarius die.

There's equality, and hence, the father, the son, is equal to the father. Oh, but there's a difference. You're not, you don't hold the die in your hand.

You hold the coin that came from the die. But the main idea, once again, in context is you get denarii from molds. That is, the sun is the revealer of God.

Oh my, how the incarnation reveals the love, righteousness, wisdom, mercy, goodness, and justice of the true and living God. Our last text in this lecture is Hebrews 2, 14 and 15. As the radiance of the father's glory, as the exact imprint of his divine nature.

By the way, that word means nature. Never does it say that Jesus has the nature of, yes it does. Yes.

Hebrews 1:3, the word apostasis means essential nature, essence, nature, being. It's not common, but there it is. The son is the exact imprint of God's essential nature.

That could be said of no one who is not God. In other words, it is said of the son affirming his deity. It is no accident that these chapters that show the incarnation reveal God, John 1, Colossians 1, and Hebrews 1 also show the deity of Christ and his humanity, which is not our immediate concern.

Hebrews 2:14, 15. Since the children, therefore, it's a quotation from the previous verse, it looks to me like it means something like the people of God or even the elect. But anyway, since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself, the son, likewise partook of the same things that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is the devil, and deliver all those who through the fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.

Jesus, to save his people, shared in their nature. The Greek says blood and flesh, that you can't translate into English that way because we don't talk that way. You must put into the receptor language something that the receivers will receive and understand.

Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself, likewise, partook of the same things. That is a vigorous statement of the incarnation. The eternal son of

God, who was God and not a human being, became a human being in Jesus of Nazareth.

He partook of flesh and blood. Why? That through death, he might destroy the one who has the power of death, the devil. Christ became a man, which is very evident here, so that he would die.

Oh yes, he had many purposes. He taught. He's our example.

He did miracles. He healed the sick and cast out demons. All of these are part of his work.

But the epitome of his work is his death and resurrection. He partook of flesh and blood that through death, he might do two things. Number one, destroy the devil.

Number two, deliver his people. That through death, he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil. The work of Christ most supremely affects God himself.

It propitiates God. It reconciles God to us and us to God. The death of Christ is directed toward us, his people.

It redeems us. It reconciles us. It delivers us.

It purifies us, both individually and as the true church, all who truly believe. The death of Christ is not only directed toward God and believers in the church; the death of Christ is also directed toward our enemies. And it defeats all of our enemies, the world, the flesh, the devil, death, hell, the whole nine yards.

It defeats all of our enemies. Here, through death, the son of God destroys the devil. That is, the incarnation of the son of God is special revelation.

Here, it shows the mighty power of God, who does two things. The taking of flesh and blood, the incarnation of the son of God, vanquishes the evil one. In principle, at the cross, in total fulfillment, after the second coming, when he is cast into the lake of fire, Revelation 20:10, forever and ever.

The second thing that the work of Christ does is to deliver all those, Hebrews 2:15, who, through fear of death, were subject to lifelong slavery. Is it wrong for believers to fear death? Yes and no. Surely, we do not, we can be uneasy about our mortality.

Who wants to leave one's family, friends, and church? I don't. I don't dwell on the thought. But what God delivers us from is the fear of the punishment of death.

1 John 4. Fear has punishment, and Christ's perfect love has driven out that fear of punishment. By God's grace, believers need not fear the wrath of God.

It's amazing. Need not fear hell. Why? Because the son of God came to die, and his death defeats the devil and delivers his people forever.

Not only from judgment but also from the incapacitation that fear of that judgment brings over their lives. Thus, in John and Paul and now in Hebrews, I'll say it again in this passage in Hebrews. It shows the power of God revealed in the incarnation.

The power to deliver a foe more powerful than we, the devil. The power to deliver God's people from hell and the fear of hell all their lives. That is great power, indeed.

It's manifested in the death and resurrection of the son of God who loved us and gave himself for us. Thus, we see every means of special revelation that we found in the Old Testament except the Urim and Thummim reproduced in the New Testament. Oh, some of them are not as numerous, to be sure.

Then we see special revelation, especially in the incarnation of the son of God, but most especially in the remaining topics of our lectures. And that is the topic of lectures, Holy Scripture. And regarding that grand topic, we will come to our next lecture.

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