

Dr. Robert A. Peterson, Salvation, Session 22, Salvation and Theological Themes, Salvation and The Kingdom of God

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This is Dr. Robert Peterson in his teaching on Salvation. This is session 22, Salvation and Theological Themes. Salvation and the Kingdom of God.

We continue our lectures on Salvation, taking Biblical Theological Themes and running them across the doctrines we have studied individually beforehand. Salvation and the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is a grand and keynote Biblical theme that connects the Testaments.

Ecuadorian Evangelical Missiologist Rene Padilla summarizes salient aspects of the Kingdom. I quote from his book, *Mission Between the Times, Essays on the Kingdom of God*, Eerdmans, 1985, pages 189 and 90. Quoting Padilla, the Kingdom of God is God's dynamic power, made visible through concrete signs, pointing to Jesus as the Messiah.

It is a new reality that has entered into the flow of history and affects human life, not only morally and spiritually, but physically and psychologically, materially and socially. In anticipation of the eschatological consummation at the end time, it has been inaugurated in the person and work of Christ. The completion of God's purpose still lies in the future, but a foretaste of the eschaton is already possible.

The New Testament presents the Church as the community of the Kingdom, in which Jesus is acknowledged as Lord of the Universe, and through which, in anticipation of the end, the Kingdom is concretely manifested in history. Interestingly, Padilla's summary of the Kingdom as a Biblical theme, among other things, underlines the already-and-not-yet dimension of the Kingdom. We will investigate ten salvific themes in relation to the Kingdom.

First of all, election. Although often overlooked, Scripture ties together election and the Kingdom. James condemns the sin of partiality because his readers were favoring the rich and neglecting the poor.

James 2:5 Listen, my dear brothers, didn't God choose the poor in this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the Kingdom that he has promised to those who love him? James 2:5 Contrary to James' readers' actions, God has favored the poor by including them among those chosen for salvation. James wants his readers to acknowledge that their showing partiality is sinful. Verse 4: And he wants them to repent.

He plays on words by teaching that God's election makes the poor, quote, rich in faith and heirs. What will those whom God chose, including the poor, inherit? God has made the poor rich in faith and heirs of the Kingdom that God has promised to those who love him, James says. Jesus puts the Kingdom or reign of God in the center of his message.

Mu unlocks James' message. Doug Moo, Letter of James, page 106. New Testament writers followed Jesus' lead, often using the language of inheriting the Kingdom to describe this final establishment of God's kingly power in the lives of his people.

1 Corinthians 6:9, 10, 15:10, Galatians 5:21, Ephesians 5:5. Christians, however poor in material possessions they may be, possess spiritual wealth presently and anticipate greater blessings in the future. It is from this spiritual vantage point, not the material, that Christians should judge others. Doug Moo.

Peter also links election and the Kingdom. After giving a list of godly qualities that should characterize believers' lives and make them useful to and fruitful for God, Peter instructs his readers, quote, Therefore, brothers and sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling in election, because if you do these things, you will never stumble. 2 Peter 1:10.

Pursuing Christian virtues will help the readers confirm for themselves the fact that God chose them for salvation and brought them to that salvation through the gospel. Peter sets forth the end of such a lifestyle, quote For in this way, entry into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be richly provided for you. 2 Peter 1:10 and 11.

The apostle wants his readers to seek the Lord with all their hearts. If they do, their lives will show it. They will have great assurance, and God will gladly welcome them into his eternal kingdom.

Union with Christ. Paul connects union with Christ and the kingdom of God in Colossians. After sharing the content of his prayers for the Christians in Colossae, he declares, The Father, quote, has rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son he loves.

In Him, we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. Colossians 1:13 and 14. Our gracious Father has given us a transfer of realms.

From the domain of darkness, he has brought us to the kingdom of his beloved Son. We are citizens of God's eternal kingdom now, and greater joys await. There's that already not-yet paradox.

God has united us to his Son in redemption, deliverance from bondage to Satan and self. That entails God's forgiveness of all our sins. F.F. Bruce captures Paul's thought, quote, Those who have been introduced into this new realm enjoy forthwith the principal benefits won for them by its ruler.

In him, they receive their redemption with the forgiveness of sins. In him, because it is only as those who share the risen life of Christ that they have made effective in them what he has done for them. Close quote, F.F. Bruce. *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*. New International Commentary on the New Testament, pages 52 and 53. Regeneration.

Jesus, Paul, and John tie together the new life of regeneration and the kingdom of God. Jesus surprised Nicodemus when, in response to his comment about Jesus' signs, Jesus said, Truly I tell you, unless someone is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God, John 3:3. Jesus teaches that no matter what credentials or lifestyle Jews bring with them, they need God's radical transformation, predicted by the Old Testament, to see or enter God's kingdom. Compare Ezekiel 36:25, and 26.

We all need the new birth that comes from above, from God himself, to enter God's saving reign. Paul also connects regeneration and God's kingdom. After frankly considering the catastrophic results that would follow if Christ were not raised from the dead, Paul affirms, quote, But as it is, Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep, 1 Corinthians 15:20. When Paul labels Jesus the firstfruits, he means that Jesus' resurrection will be the cause of his people being raised to life.

He then juxtaposes the two atoms, 1 Corinthians 15:20-24. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead also comes through a man. For just as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive, but each in his own order. Christ the firstfruits, afterward at his coming, those who belong to Christ.

Then comes the end, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, when he abolishes all rule and all authority and power, 1 Corinthians 15:20-24. Adam's original sin brought physical and spiritual death to humankind. Christ, death and resurrection, emphasized here, brings eternal life to his people. This eternal life means regeneration now and resurrection to life in the age to come.

Already, not yet. Christ dies and rises in service to the kingdom that will only be fully revealed when he completes his role as mediator, turning everything over to his Father. When John contemplates a new Jerusalem, he combines images of the kingdom of God and new life as well.

Revelation 22:1-3 Then he showed me the river of the water of life, clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb, down the middle of the city's main

street. The tree of life was on each side of the river, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree are to bless the nations, and there will no longer be any curse.

The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will worship him. Revelation 22:1-3 In the vision, John sees the thrones of God and of the Lamb at both ends of the passage. He also sees pictures of eternal life.

The river of the water of life, flowing from the thrones of the Father and Son, and the tree of life. Plainly, John portrays the final dimension of God's reign with his emphasis on the thrones of God and the Lamb. John combines this with eternal life as Beal shows.

Gregory Beal, Book of Revelation, page 1113 The living waters, coming from God and the Lamb, represent eternal life, because the presence of God imparts life to all those able to enter into intimate communion with him. So 22:17, writes Beale. Further, God's kingdom promotes eternal life and banishes the curse, again as Beal notes.

There will be no form of curse in the New Jerusalem because God's consummate, ruling presence will fill the city. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it. That was from page 1113 of Beale's commentary.

The former quote was from page 1107. Calling Jesus, Paul, and Peter is a tie calling to the kingdom of God. He doesn't use the word call, but King Jesus predicts his future, calling God's people to receive their inheritance in the final kingdom of God.

Then the king will say to those on his right, come, you who are blessed by my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world, Matthew 25:34. This involves eternal life, in contrast to the eternal punishment the unsaved will receive, verse 46. Paul wants the Thessalonian Christians to live for God now, in light of his future, calling them into the final manifestation of God's kingdom and glory.

1 Thessalonians 2:11 and 12. As you know, like a father with his own children, we encouraged, comforted, and implored each one of you to walk worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory. 1 Thessalonians 2:11 and 12.

Peter urges his readers to strengthen their certainty of salvation by pursuing the Christian virtues that he just listed. Quote, therefore, brothers, make every effort to continue to confirm your calling in election. Because if you do these things, you will never stumble.

For in this way, entry into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, will be richly provided for you. 2 Peter 1:10 and 11. Living for God with our whole hearts experientially confirms the fact that God brought us to faith in Christ and called us.

This, in turn, is how we learn that the Father chose us, for he draws us to faith in his Son. He draws us to faith in his Son, those given him by the Father, John 6, 37-40. The result of God's choosing and calling us, and our resultant living for him, is his richly welcoming us into Christ's eternal kingdom.

Conversion. As we have shown, conversion consists of repentance, turning from sin and faith, and turning to Christ, offered in the gospel. The New Testament shows both aspects of conversion occurring in the context of the preaching of the kingdom of God.

John the Baptist and Jesus linked their calls to repentance with the coming of the kingdom in Jesus' ministry. Matthew 3:1-2. In those days, John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea and saying, Repent, because the kingdom of heaven has come near.

Matthew 3:1-2. And Matthew 4:17. From then on, Jesus began to preach, Repent, because the kingdom of heaven has come near.

Matthew 4:17. Jesus Christ is the great royal Son of David. 2 Samuel 7:12-16.

And messianic king, foretold by Isaiah. Isaiah 9:6, and 7. John the Baptist pointed to Jesus as the one coming after him who would inaugurate the kingdom in its New Testament expression. Jesus, like John, preached repentance.

But unlike John, Jesus himself brought the kingdom in his teaching, healing, exorcisms, and other miracles. At the same time, Jesus predicted a greater appearance of the kingdom at Pentecost, when Jesus would pour out the Spirit on the church. When he did so, when Jesus did so, Peter preaches a powerful message of repentance.

And many were converted. Jesus also foretold that the greatest coming of the kingdom would accompany his second advent. When Paul was imprisoned in Rome, he also joined a message of conversion and the kingdom of God.

Luke describes this, quote, in Acts 28:23, and 24. Many came to Paul at his lodging. From dawn to dusk, he expounded and testified about the kingdom of God.

He tried to persuade them about Jesus from both the law and the prophets. Some were persuaded by what he said, but others did not believe. Acts 28:23, and 24.

Luke emphasized faith as a response to Paul's proclamation of the gospel while imprisoned. Justification. Paul unites the kingdom and justification when he treats the two Adams in Romans 5. Although Romans 5:12 through 21, is the textus classicus for original sin, in its context, it even focuses more on Christ's atonement as the ground of free justification to everyone who believes.

Kingdom language permeates the passage. Paul speaks of the reign of death. Romans 5:14, and 17.

And the reign of sin, verse 21. This language serves as contrasting background for the apostle's main message of believers reigning in life. Romans 5:17.

And of grace, reigning in righteousness, verse 12. Paul's kingdom language, in turn, sets the stage for his contrast between Adam's one trespass, bringing condemnation, and Christ's one righteous act, bringing justification, leading to life, verse 18. Paul juxtaposes Adam's primal disobedience, which made people sinners, with Christ's obedience, which will make his people righteous.

Thus, in Paul's famous text on the two Adams, he deals with justification in the context of God's kingdom. Adoption. The theme of the kingdom of God so pervades the scriptures that it intersects with most pictures of salvation, including adoption.

We observe this in the teaching of King Jesus as he speaks of his return in glory, quote, to sit on his glorious throne and to separate the sheep from the goats, Matthew 25:31. He will eternally bless his people when he welcomes them. Come, you are blessed by my father.

Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world, Matthew 25:34. Jesus' words, inherit the kingdom, arrest our attention because they mix two metaphors, as we said previously, one familial and one royal.

King Jesus has a kingdom. And here he calls his own into the full revelation of that kingdom. As he does so, he tells them to enter into their inheritance, which is the privilege of the sons and daughters of God who have adopted them into his family.

In scripture's last book, John presents the new heaven and the new earth. In this context, he hears, quote, a loud voice from the throne of God announcing his comforting presence with his people, Revelation 21:3. Quote, then the one seated on the throne said, look, I am making everything new and proclaims it done, verses 5 and 6. Then God promises, quote, I will freely give to the thirsty from the spring of the water of life. The one who conquers will inherit these things.

And I will be his God, and he will be my son, verses 6 and 7. Here as the king ushering in the end, God speaks as the father who acknowledges his adopted children and promises them a rich inheritance in his kingdom. God, the king who rules his people, is also God, the father who loves those he graciously adopted into his family. For all eternity, he will be their king and their father, and they will be his subjects and his beloved children.

Sanctification both testaments coordinate the kingdom of God and sanctification. In a vision, Daniel sees God, quote, the ancient of days, sitting on his awesome throne in heaven with myriads of angels as attendants and judging and destroying the earthly kingdoms that opposed him, Daniel 7:9 to 12. Daniel's message is clear, quote, the most high is the reigning king in heaven and earth.

Those are the words of Joyce Baldwin in her Daniel commentary in the Tyndale Old Testament commentary series, page 139. Then Daniel sees, quote, one like a son of man coming with the clouds of heaven who approaches the ancient of days and receives a universal and eternal kingdom in which all people will serve him, Daniel 7:13 and 14. Along with his kingdom, with this kingdom language, for the ancient of days and son of man are references to God's people.

Six times they're called holy ones or saints, Daniel 7, verses 18, 21, 22, two times, 25 and 27. The Most High will prevail over all earthly kingdoms, deliver his holy ones and they will reign with him forever, verses 15 through 27. After Jesus told the parable of the weeds in the field, his disciples asked him to explain it to them, Matthew 13:36.

He identified the sower of good seed as a son of man, the fields as the world, the good seed as the children of God's kingdom, weeds as children of the devil, and the enemy who sowed them as the devil, verses 37 through 39. Jesus then applied imagery of the weeds being gathered and burned to the fate of the lost. The son of man will send out his angels and they will gather from his kingdom all who cause sin and those guilty of lawlessness.

They will throw them into the blazing furnace where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, verses 41 through 42. Far different will be the fate of the saved, quote, then the righteous will shine like the sun in their father's kingdom, Matthew 13:43. Jesus alluding to Daniel 12:3 in the Septuagint is not teaching merit theology that the righteous earn God's favor, rather the righteous are the godly, saved freely by his grace, though that is not stated here.

Jesus contrasts them with those guilty of lawlessness, verse 41. Carson helps us, quote, these righteous people, once the lights of the world, now radiate perfections and experience bliss in the consummation of their hopes, close quote, Carson

Matthew in the Expositors Bible Commentary, page 327. Having lived holy lives by God's grace, they will reflect the glory of God in their Father's kingdom, verse 43.

Paul, too, links the kingdom of God and sanctification. Christians in Rome strongly disagree concerning clean and unclean foods and the observance of holy days. He urges both strong and weak believers, that is Gentile and Jewish believers respectively, to promote unity among themselves.

They are not to judge one another, but to be careful not to cause one another to sin, Romans 14:13. They are not to overemphasize matters of minor importance, because, quote, the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit, verse 17. Although he often speaks of forensic righteousness in Romans, the context indicates that here he speaks of the moral righteousness of believers.

Holiness. Paul teaches that the most important things in God's kingdom are not our views on debatable matters but the holiness, unity, and joy that the Spirit instills. Preservation.

Jesus instructs his disciples that they are not to follow the mores of the kings of the Gentiles who lorded over their subjects. Instead, those in Jesus' kingdom are to follow the example of Jesus himself, who said, Luke 22:27, I am among you as one who serves, Luke 22:27. Jesus promises them the blessings of his future kingdom.

I bestow on you a kingdom, just as my father bestowed one on me, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and you will sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Luke 22, verses 29 and 30. There follows Jesus' promise to pray for Peter that his faith will not completely fail from an attack of Satan, verses 31, and 32.

Peter denies whoever would do such a thing, verse 33. Then Jesus predicts that Peter will deny him three times in verse 34. In a context dealing with the future kingdom of God, Jesus predicts Peter will persevere in his faith, quote, even after wavering terribly.

Why did he succeed? Not because of the greatness of his dedication to Christ. He persevered because his Lord preserved him by praying for him. I'm quoting myself again.

Our Secure Salvation, Preservation and Apostasy, page 30. Mercifully, the glorified Christ, in his role of the heavenly king, does the same thing today for his struggling people. Paul also teaches God's preservation of his saints in the context of the kingdom.

After affirming Christ's deity and his kingship over every ruler and authority, Colossians 2:10, Paul tells how God regenerated and forgave all who believe in Jesus, verse 13. Paul's next words depict God's preservation of his people in Christ's cross. Quote, he erased the certificate of debt with its obligations that was against us and opposed to us, and has taken it away by nailing it to the cross.

He disarmed the rulers and authorities and disgraced them publicly. He triumphed over them in him, Colossians 2, verses 14 and 15. In his atonement, Christ paid the sin debt that we could not pay, and he paid it in full.

On that basis, God, quote, forgave us all our trespasses, verse 13. The apostles' words in verse 15 form an inclusion with those in verse 10. Christ, the victorious king, vanquished the evil spiritual powers.

Believers will persevere to the end and be saved because God preserves them. And one important basis of preservation is the saving work of King Jesus, as we saw when we dealt with preservation. Another, excuse me, approaching death, Paul personally testifies to God's keeping him saved for entrance, quote, into his heavenly kingdom, 2 Timothy 4:18. In closing personal remarks, in his second letter to Timothy, the apostle asks him to come and minister to him.

Paul's tone is mixed, speaking of friends and enemies. He reports that at the beginning of legal proceedings, he was alone. Paul's confidence, however, in this life and the next is not in human support but in the Lord's.

God strengthened him, enabling him to preach the gospel. Before giving God praise, he ends on a triumphant note, quote, the Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen. 2 Timothy 4:18.

Yarbrough underlines God's preservation of his apostle. Quote, Paul expects death soon. Even in death, the believer is not separated from Christ. Romans 8:37 to 39. Will bring me safely refers to Christ's work of redemption that ensures the believer's arrival in his heavenly kingdom.

That is in heaven. Yarbrough letters to Timothy and Titus. Pillar New Testament Commentary, pages 455 to 456.

Eternal life and glorification. Scripture coordinates the themes of eternal life and glory with the kingdom of God. We see this in the gospels, at least once in Paul and in Revelation.

As we observed, Jesus speaking in royal language promised eternal blessings to those whose dedication to him involves sacrifice. Matthew 19, verses 28 and 29. Truly I tell

you, in the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on 12 thrones, judging the 12 tribes of Israel.

And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields because of my name will receive a hundred times more and will inherit eternal life. Matthew 19:28 and 29. In addition, returning King Jesus, after separating believers and unbelievers, will promise the former.

Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. Matthew 25:34. At the end of the same discourse, Jesus promises them eternal life.

Matthew 25:46. Paul urges Thessalonians to pursue sanctification by reminding them that God called them, quote, into his own kingdom and glory. 1 Thessalonians 2:12.

Although Paul does not speak of the kingdom of God as often as Jesus, he here combined kingdom with a favorite theme, glory, in the space of three words. Revelation also combines royal language with pictures of final salvation. Jesus promised every overcomer in the church of Laodicea, quote, to the one who conquers, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne just as I also conquered and sat down with my father on his throne.

Revelation 3:21. Jesus thus promises admission to the final installment of the kingdom of God to those who conquer the opposition of the world. Later, John speaks of those cleansed by Jesus' atonement.

Revelation 7:16 and 17. They are before the throne of God, and they serve him day and night in his temple. The one seated on the throne will shelter them.

They will no longer hunger. They will no longer thirst. The sun will no longer strike them, nor will any scorching heat.

For the lamb who is at the center of the throne will shepherd them. He will guide them to springs of the waters of life, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Revelation 7:16 and 17.

I love the mixed metaphor. The lamb will shepherd them. The lamb, of course, is the apocalypse's favorite designation for Christ.

John thus combines kingdom language with images of God's final deliverance of his people, including their access to springs of the waters of life. Further, Revelation fittingly links God's final reign with the worship of his people. Revelation 11:15 through 18.

The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign forever and ever. The 24 elders who were seated before God on their thrones fell face down and worshiped God, saying, We give you thanks, Lord God, the Almighty, who is and who was because you have taken your great power and have begun to reign. The nations were angry, but your wrath has come.

The time has come for the dead to be judged and to give the reward to your servants, to prophets, to the saints, and to those who fear your name, both great and small. Revelation 11:15 through 18. In our next lecture, we will examine the theme of covenant, the biblical-theological theme of covenant, and likewise see how it crisscrosses many of these doctrines of salvation we have studied throughout these lectures.

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