

# **Dr. Robert A. Peterson, Church and Last Things, Session 11, Last Things Introduction, Two Ages, Kingdom of God, Already and Not Yet**

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This is Dr. Robert A. Peterson in his teaching on Doctrines of the Church and Last Things. This is session 11, Last Things Introduction, Two Ages, Kingdom of God, Already and Not Yet.

Up until now, our study has dealt with the doctrine of the church. We now switch to the topic of the last things and let us pray.

Gracious Father, thank you for your word. Thank you for its teachings. Thank you that it does teach about things to come. Help us to be careful and biblical and major on majors and minor on minors. Lead us in your truth. Bless us; we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Our overview of last things is, first of all, an introduction in which we'll treat the two ages, the kingdom of God, and the most important single principle in my mind to the study of eschatology, the already and the not yet.

Then we'll study death and the intermediate state, the second coming of Christ, the signs of the times, the millennium of Revelation 20, the resurrection of the body, and then the eternal state. Well, the last judgment and then the eternal state, which means a resurrected existence on a new earth for the righteous and eternal hell for the unrighteous. Introduction, the two ages.

The New Testament contrasts the present age and the age to come. Matthew 12:32. In the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit passage, Jesus is emphasizing the fact that those who blaspheme the Spirit need to be understood in this context, of course, will never, ever be forgiven.

Here's how he says it. Verse 31: therefore, I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people, but the blasphemy against the spirit will not be forgiven. And whoever speaks a word against the son of man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or the age to come.

The New Testament distinguishes between this age and that age or the present age and the age to come. Here, the imagery is mixed. It's this age and the age to come.

The meaning is they'll never, ever be forgiven. Some have incorrectly deduced from this that there's a possibility, not for this, but for other sins, you could be forgiven in the age to come. That is not at all the intention of Jesus' words.

But my whole point right now is to contrast this age and the age to come. Luke 20:34, and 35 make the same comparison. So, it was a speech figure there in Matthew 12.

In Luke 20, it's not. Luke 20;30, Luke 20:34, 35. Oh, the Sadducees are trying to trip Jesus up.

A woman had seven husbands. They all died. They don't believe in the resurrection of the dead. So, whose husband is she going to have in the resurrection? All seven of them like that. Jesus said, the sons of this age notice the terminology, marry, and are given in marriage. But those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and to the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage for they cannot die anymore because they're equal to angels and are sons of God being sons of the resurrection.

Literally, they're like the angels. And that has spawned difficulty. People say, oh, you become an angel when you die, which is not what he's saying.

He's comparing one specific thing that angels don't. Apparently, they don't suffer mortality. Angels don't die.

But here's the point. Jesus contrasts this age and that age. Marriage belongs to this age.

There is no marriage in the age to come like that. I could show more such passages, but that is enough. This age and that age, the present age and the age to come, and mixtures of that terminology.

Now, this age is characterized by evil Galatians 1 for Jesus died to deliver us from this present evil age. It is characterized by spiritual blindness. 2 Corinthians 4:4, the devil blinds.

I got to get it right. Second Corinthians four, four. In this case, the God of this world, or you could translate of this age, has blinded the minds of unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

This age is characterized by evil Galatians 1 for spiritual blindness. 2 Corinthians 4:4 and spiritual death. Ephesians 2:1 and 2.

And you were dead in your trust in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked. Following the course of this, you could translate world or age following the prints of the power of the air and so forth. This age is characterized by evil spiritual blindness and spiritual death.

The age to come or that age is characterized by the resurrection of the dead. We saw it there in Luke 20:35 and 36. The age to come is characterized by no death and resurrection.

Eternal life. Luke 18. It's another good one to see the two ages contrasted.

As a matter of fact, this is Jewish. First of all, it shows up in Jewish writings between the testaments. This contrast between the two ages and Jesus and the apostles are people of their age, pardon the pun, and they pick up this terminology. Luke 18.

After Jesus says, it's impossible for rich people to be saved. At least with man, it is with God. Nothing's impossible.

Who then can be saved? The disciples respond in 26. Jesus said what is impossible with man is possible with God. And Peter said, see, we have left our homes and followed you.

And he said to them, truly, I say to you, there's no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God, who will not receive many times more in this time. It's a synonym for this age in this context and in the age to come eternal life. This time does speak of this age because of its contrast here to the age to come.

Those who sacrifice for the kingdom of God will receive many times more in this age, this time. That is, if one even is put out by one's family, one finds many more parents and brothers and sisters and so forth, children, so to speak, among the people of God. We're like a family here, like that kind of a notion.

That's in this age, this time, but in the age to come, they will receive eternal life. In other words, if this age is characterized by evil, spiritual blindness, and death, the age to come is characterized by the resurrection, Luke 20:35, 36, eternal life, Luke 18:30, and the riches of God's grace, Ephesians 2:7, Ephesians 2:7, so that in the coming ages, God might show the immeasurable kindness, immeasurable riches of his grace and kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. So, Jesus contrasts the two ages big time.

This age, evil, spiritual blindness, spiritual death. That age, the age to come, resurrection, eternal life, the riches of God's grace. Now, we come to debatable matters.

There's a sense in which the consummation of the ages has already come. I say it this way. This age is the present age, and it is put over against the age to come.

This age, that age, the present age, the age to come. Now, this whole discussion assumes the Old Testament. It assumes a background.

So, really now, we have three ages. The Old Testament times, this age, the time of the Messiah, that age, the time yet to come. There's a sense in which the consummation of the age or ages, from an Old Testament perspective, is fulfilled in this age already.

So, this is a fulfillment of that, and this is a precursor of that. And the coming age is the fulfillment of the present age, and even of the past age, if you will. 1 Corinthians 10:11.

I need to set out the biblical evidence and then talk about the disputes because there are disputes. And I'll give you my opinion. 1 Corinthians 10 chronicles the sins of the Israelites.

Apparently, some of the Corinthians believed that the Lord's Supper gave them immunity from the deleterious effects of demons. They were going into idle temples or even visiting prostitutes in the temples and feeling they were immune from all that because they took the Lord's Supper. Paul is not happy at all with this, and he says, the fathers were all baptized into Moses.

1 Corinthians 10:2. And they all drank the same spiritual food, like that. Ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink. He's looking at the Old Testament realities through the prism of the spectacles of New Testament sacraments.

And so, they were baptized, and they had spiritual food, but it didn't give them immunity. And he lists four sins characteristic of the fathers in the wilderness. Idolatry, tempting God, sexual immorality, and grumbling.

Boy, grumbling comes in for some tough company, doesn't it? Wow. So that's the flow of thought. They had sacramental blessings, and they actually did have the benefits without having New Testament sacraments.

They had circumcision and Passover, but even that is not his point. They had spiritual realities, and that didn't keep them from suffering God's judgment when they sinned in those four ways. So, you, watch out.

Don't take things for granted—verse 11. We have a benefit that they didn't have because their history is written for us, and we're to benefit from their bad example.

Something like that. 1 Corinthians 10:11. Now, after speaking of the judgment that the Lord gave them, the destruction by serpents, for example.

Now, these things, 1 Corinthians 10:11, happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction. And here's how he describes New Testament believers. On whom the end of the ages has come.

This is not the not yet. This is not the age to come, excuse me. This age is the end of the ages, definitely in this passage, from the perspective of the Old Testament people of God.

That's what he's talking about. Specifically, the Israelites in the wilderness, who grumbled, engaged in sexual immorality, tested God, and especially, were idolaters. So don't you think the Lord's Supper gives you immunity either, like that?

Live for the Lord. Respond to God's grace with faith and a life that pleases God. That kind of stuff is going on here.

Therefore, verse 12, let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed, lest he fall, and on it goes. So, there is a sense in which, that's what he says, the consummation, the end of the ages, has come in this age from an Old Testament perspective. Hebrews 1:2, the Old Testament uses the expression of the last days, sometimes to speak of the future.

Long ago, Hebrews 1:1, at many times, and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets. Now, the writer of Hebrews uses the expression of the last days, but he adds a little pronoun and a little pronoun descriptor to it. But in these last days, what? The last days are here.

He has spoken to us by his son. 1 Corinthians 10:11, Hebrews 1:2, Hebrews 9:26. Once again, in a context, the whole book of Hebrews is a context, the context, redemptive historically, of a contrast of the New Testament and its superiority to the Old.

He's showing Jesus the superiority of Jesus, priesthood, and sacrifice. Hebrews 9, 25, nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own, on the day of atonement. 9:26, for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly that Christ would have since the foundation of the world.

But as it is, he's appeared once and for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by his sacrifice. Two verses later, he's going to come a second time. So here we have the time of the Old Testament, the day of atonement.

We have the end of the ages again, that expression, and we have the second coming. The terminology is not identical, but we understand what's going on. And as a matter of fact, this is the controversial one, Hebrews 6:5. Within this great, the great Bible's most famous warning passage, we have this expression.

It is impossible in the case of those who have, and it describes them in a number of ways, who have then fallen away, verse 6, to restore them again to repentance. It describes them as having certain blessings, and here are the blessings. They've been enlightened.

They tasted the heavenly gift. They're shared in the Holy Spirit. They've tasted the goodness of the word of God, and they've tasted the powers of the age to come.

Wait a minute. Now, they have tasted the powers of the age to come. What does that mean? George Ladd did as much for evangelical eschatology as anybody.

Wonderful books on the kingdom and so forth, but I don't follow him on this particular point. There's a debate. Does this mean that the future becomes the present in some mysterious way? He made that idea popular, and it's really popularized and so forth.

I don't agree. I'd rather follow David Lloyd Jones. He wasn't really my mentor, but he was a senior theologian, and I was happy to, sure, call him my mentor in some way. Certainly, my colleague, an older colleague from whom I learned much, and as a matter of fact, my notes on the last things at first were his notes that I developed.

In any case, rather than some kind of strange notion of the future entering into the present, how can time reverse itself like that? Rather, I think it's the common New Testament notion that the present is a precursor of the future. That is, the experience of these professed Hebrew Christians was in this age, but it was in anticipation through the spirit of the age to come. In any case, the two-age theology is foundational for New Testament eschatology.

You will find when we get to the millennium, I'm very gracious and open and acknowledge, as a matter of fact, that all four viewpoints, amillennialism, postmillennialism, and both historic and dispensational premillennialism, have the most important things in common, okay? And then I share the differences, and then I follow a good book by a good man, Stan Grenz, the millennial maze, who says, the exegesis is fixed. The table is set. Evangelicals are not going to agree, but I say, I agree, but I have four truths that they all hold in common.

Second coming, resurrection, last judgment, eternal destinies. Those are the most important things. I have a view of the millennium, but I don't hold it on the same level as those things.

And number two, he says, each of those four viewpoints contains truth. I agree. We distinguish theology from exegesis.

So, although I don't agree with the postmillennial exegesis of Revelation 20 or even of the whole New Testament, I do like their optimism for the gospel, just to cite one example. I mention this because Hoekema, in his book, *The Bible in the Future*, has really become a standard for last things. He is a millennial. He has a chapter on premillennialism, and he shows great appreciation for his dispensational brothers, and so forth. But he raises serious questions concerning the premillennial millennium.

Here's one of his problems. It seems not to belong to either this age or the age to come. It has mortals, people who die, mixed with resurrected people.

Mortals belong to this age. Resurrected people belong to the age to come. I will share the problems of all the viewpoints, and the most important thing to me is the commonalities and, thirdly, the strengths of each of those.

And premillennialism definitely has strengths. Perhaps chief among them is the most natural exegesis of Revelation 20, one through six. So, the believers in the New Testament times, and still today, taste the powers of the coming age.

I think they do so in anticipation as the spirit works in their lives and in their midst—three introductory ideas. The first is the two ages.

The second is the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is a New Testament concept, but it has deep roots in the Old Testament. I have notes, but I can do it without notes, at least in a basic principle.

God is the king in the Old Testament. Oh, my goodness. Psalm 103.

The Lord has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all. In the context of Psalm 103, it's the kingdom over human beings, especially his covenant people, and the angels, his people following that verse, the angels, his people preceding that verse, the angels following that verse. Psalm 103 and verse 20.

The Lord has established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all. Bless the Lord, O you, his angels, you mighty ones who do his word and so forth, preceding believers, human beings, believers are part of his kingdom, following verses, angels are part of his kingdom. There's even a bigger sense that God is Lord over the whole universe in the Old Testament.

And then he's Lord over men and angels. And then he's Lord over humankind. And then he has a special kingdom over his people, Israel, most pronounced in 2 Samuel 7, and the institution of the Davidic covenant where God reigns through Solomon and his successors as a father relates to his sons.

So, there's definitely a big Old Testament background. Waltke talks about God's general kingdom overall and his special kingdom over the people of God. That is continued and extended into the New Testament.

And Jesus inaugurates the kingdom in his public ministry. As a matter of fact, there are phases, stages. Jesus inaugurates the kingdom in his public ministry.

The kingdom is expanded when Jesus sits at God's right hand. The kingdom will only be consummated at the second coming, inauguration, expansion, consummation, public ministry, session, and return of Christ. The kingdom of God with that rich Old Testament background, which I barely touched, was inaugurated in Jesus' public ministry.

Back to Matthew 12, Jesus is casting out demons by the spirit of God. And the Jewish leaders know it, and they still blaspheme by saying he's doing it by Satan. They really get Jesus' goat on this one.

And he lets them have it with both barrels. He says, that'll never be forgiven. They committed an eternal sin.

Oh, he says other things, too, but he casts out some demons, and they say it's done by Beelzebub. Again, another intertestamental name for the devil. It's only by Beelzebub, the prince of demons, that this man casts out demons, Matthew 12:24.

Knowing their thoughts, he said to them, how can Satan cast out Satan? 27, if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore, they will be your judge. Here's the clincher, Matthew 12:28. But if it is by the spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

Both John the Baptist and Jesus announce repentance, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. The kingdom is inaugurated in Jesus' teaching, in his healings, in his exorcisms. The spirit of God, Matthew says, Luke says, the finger of God.

That's a remarkable metaphor, isn't it? If I cast out demons by Beelzebub, if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. Finger of God for the spirit of God. Sure, sure.

We use our hands and fingers to manipulate our world. All you have to do is whack one finger with a hammer really well, and you'll recognize that. Ouch, ouch.

You never realize you used it to do everything. With these digits, we manipulate the world and we live more than ever in the computer age. Goodness, and our cell phones.

Jesus means by the agency of God, by the power of God. The magicians of Pharaoh can duplicate some of Moses' signs and plagues, but then one plague comes, and they can't duplicate it, and they say, this is the hand of God. Ah, whatever the boils or whatever it is, the boils are on their bodies.

Yikes. Our magic arts can't touch this. This is the doing of, and this is the hand of God.

Gasp. They're testifying for Moses. Yeah, because they're in pain is what's going on.

Jesus brings the parables of the kingdom, Matthew 13. He does the works of the kingdom. He brings the kingdom of God because he's the king.

Now, it is a spiritual kingdom, and some of these things are just a foretaste. Resurrections and healings, the people die again. The people die after that.

The people he raised, the widow of Nain's son, Jairus' daughter, and Lazarus, presumably died again. They'd be really old if they were still alive in Israel. 2,000 years old.

I don't think so. They died. But those are little foretellings of the life, the resurrection of the dead, and the life in the new earth.

Jesus brought the kingdom in newness and power, but you haven't seen anything yet. He dies, he rises, he ascends, he sits down at God's right hand, and we have testimonies like this. Acts 5:31.

They were told, the Sanhedrin said, to stop talking about Jesus. Peter's answer, verse 29, we must obey God rather than men. God of our fathers raised Jesus whom you killed by hanging him on a tree.

God exalted him at his right hand as leader and savior, and he is still active in giving repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. As a matter of fact, Howard Marshall is right in his book on Acts, on Luke, as a historian and theologian. In the first book, O Theophilus, I dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach until the day when he was taken up after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen.

In the gospel of Luke, Luke writes about all Jesus began to do and teach. In the book of Acts, the implication is that Luke writes about what Jesus continues to do and to teach. You see, the kingdom is expanded.

Jesus is at God's right hand, bestowing divine gifts of repentance and forgiveness, Acts 5:31, on all who believe. Ephesians 1:19 to 23, I said the different millennial viewpoints contain truth. If the amillennial exegesis of Revelation 20 is wrong, their theology that Jesus now reigns is not wrong.

That would be an example of true theology and incorrect exegesis if it is incorrect. Ephesians 1, 19 and following, Paul wants the Ephesians to know the immeasurable greatness of God's power toward us who believe, according to the working of his might, great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him his head over all things to the church.

Jesus reigns now. He is above all rule and authority and power and dominion. And here's this language again, and above every name that is named, not only in this age, notice, but also in the age to come.

Here are the two ages contrasted, showing the present royal office of Jesus. Oh, he's going to reign outwardly and more universally in the future, but he reigns already spiritually. So, if that is the teaching of amillennialism, it's a teaching of the Bible, regardless of the exegesis of Revelation 20.

Colossians 1:13 and 14 is an occasion of Paul's uncommon use. The gospels have much more use of the language, kingdom of God, kingdom of heaven. Colossians 1:13, 14, the father has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Jesus inaugurates the kingdom when he preaches the parables of the kingdom when he does miracles, and when he casts out demons. The kingdom of God has come upon you. It's the reign and rule of God.

Yes, it existed in the Old Testament, but now the king is on the scene. The kingdom God expands the kingdom. I suppose, especially the Holy Spirit expands the kingdom as Jesus not only ascends, but sits down, sharing God's throne, if you will.

The kingdom will only be consummated when the king comes again. Matthew 25:31 and following gives the sheep and the goats passage. When the son of man comes in

his glory, notice how he's portrayed, and all his angels with him, the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne.

This is King Jesus. All the nations will be gathered before him. This is King Jesus ruling universally, and he'll separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.

Sheep are on the right, goats are on the left. He says 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. He banishes the goats out of his presence into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels, verse 41.

The kingdom will only be consummated when Jesus returns. 1 Corinthians 15:22 through 28. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive, but each in his own order.

Christ, the first fruits, then at his coming, those who belong to Christ, then come to an end when he delivers the kingdom to God, the Father, after destroying every rule and every authority and power, for he must reign until he's put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

For God has put all things in subjection under his feet, but when he says all things are put in subjection, it is plain that he, God, is accepted, who put all things in subjection under him, the son. When all things are subjected to the son, then the son himself will also be subjected to him. That's wrong.

When all things are subjected to him, the father, then the son himself will also be subjected to him, the father, who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all. Jesus inaugurated the kingdom in his public ministry. It was expanded in his session at God's right hand.

It will only be consummated at his return. The two ages are fundamental in understanding New Testament eschatology. The different stages of the kingdom are also very important.

Overly realized eschatologies are dangerous. The end has not yet come. Yes, God heals, but we cannot name it and claim it.

It is not true that if you have enough faith, you will be healed. It is simply not true because, well, even so-called healers and what they do, they still all die. Death belongs to this age.

The lack of death, Jesus said, as we saw in the first passages in Luke, for example, and eternal life belong to the age to come. Stages of the kingdom in two ages are

important, but nothing is more important as far as a fundamental principle of last things than the already and not yet. This already means that the promises made in the Old Testament have been fulfilled.

The not yet means they're still to be fulfilled in fullness. The already, this is a linear notion. It looks from the Old Testament to now and says already.

And by the way, this is biblical language. 1 John 2, already many antichrists have gone out into the world. Children, it is the last hour.

Forget about the last days. It is already the last hour in the New Testament. The last days are the times in between the comings of Christ.

Jesus brings the last days. Yes, there are already, not yet last days, if you will, but it's not only the future, that concept. It is the last hour.

And as you've heard, the antichrist is coming. So now many antichrists have come. Therefore, we know it is the last hour.

Here's my thesis. Not only is the already and not yet all over the New Testament. As a matter of fact, it even has its roots in the Old Testament, of course.

But every major feature of last things is already and not yet. The passage I just read speaks of antichrist. My understanding is, compared with 2 Thessalonians 2, there's yet a future antichrist figure.

It is the last hour. As you heard, the antichrist is coming. And I think it's still to come.

So now, many antichrists have come. And a single antichrist figure, not yet. Many antichrist already.

He goes on to say how they deny the Father and the Son. And he builds them up by saying, you know the truth. You did well in rejecting them.

They rejected you, but their going showed that they did not really belong to the Lord. Hold your heads up. Go forward.

Persevere. You're taught by the Spirit and so forth. Every major aspect of last things is already and not yet.

Salvation, John chapter 3. You say surely salvation and condemnation belong to the last day. Yes, they do in a technical sense. And the fullness of both will only be revealed in the last day.

Agreed. It's not yet. But watch this.

After John 3:6, 3:17 says, for God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned. Now you say, wait a minute.

Condemnation pertains to the last judgment when God consigns people to hell. That is true. The final justification does the same.

They're not condemned. John says they're not condemned now. And furthermore, whoever does not believe is condemned; there's the word already.

Because he is not believed in the name of the only Son of God, condemnation is present and future. It is already and not yet.

Salvation, present, not condemned. Future. We will be justified before men and angels on that last day by God's grace.

Every major aspect of last things is both. This creates a tension in the New Testament that is wonderful to behold—second coming.

John 14:3. I'm going to prepare a place for you. I will come again. That's not yet.

I will come again and take you to myself. I will come again. There it is in black and white.

Jesus' statement that he will return. John 14:23. Surely Jesus is still coming back in the future. That's the not yet.

But even in the same chapter, I see it in an already sense. If anyone loves me, John 14:23, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. God promises fellowship with believers who love and obey the Father and the Son.

They will know God. This is eternal life, John 17:3, that they know you, the only true God in Jesus Christ whom you have sent. This is our fellowship, 1 John 1 around verse 3. Our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.

There is a sense that Jesus comes now into his people's lives. It would be wrong to say that and then deny the not-yet coming. That's absurd.

All over the place, the New Testament says he's coming again. There's a sense that Pentecost is Jesus coming already in the Spirit. That works.

But not to deny that there's a futuristic second coming. Salvation and condemnation, second coming, Antichrist, on and on. Resurrection, John 5. Resurrection is spiritual and physical.

Spiritual now in regeneration, physical not yet in the resurrection of the body. John 5:24, 25. If you weren't eloquent to the context, you would think this was talking of the last day.

Truly, truly, I say to you, John 5:24, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment but has passed from death to life. Truly, truly, I say to you, 5:25, an hour is coming and is now here.

That's already language in John. When the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. He's talking about Lazarus, right? No.

He's talking about the very preceding verse, moving from death to life. That is, regeneration is a spiritual resurrection, and it happens now in the already. Aha, well, then there's no futuristic resurrection, right? Wrong.

Do not marvel at this, 28. You're going to see something greater is the meaning. For an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice, the voice of the Son of Man, and come out of those tombs.

Those who have done good to the resurrection of life, those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment. Resurrection, too, is already in regeneration and not yet in the physical resurrection of the body. As a result, believers live in this tension between the already and the not-yet.

Romans 8, already we have the Holy Spirit in our mortal bodies. We have the Spirit, but our bodies are mortal. They're going to die.

We're a contradiction in terms. Oh, it beats being, not having the Holy Spirit in your mortal body. You'd be unsaved.

You'd have death and death if you will. No, we have life in the midst of death, so to speak. We live in this tension, and as a result, we should be realistic and optimistic.

I once heard a preacher. I will not give any more details. I don't want him to be identified.

I'm sure he's a good man. But he said it was the occasion of a funeral for a godly woman that we, many of us knew. I don't do funerals.

And the whole service was all about victory and so forth. No time to mourn. Death was not pictured as an enemy as it is in the Bible.

Just victory, light, and so forth. That's not realistic. That's an overly realized eschatology.

I know another such thing, which was the same way. This is a good Baptist preacher. And I knew the man who died.

His son and one of my sons were good buddies. I sat at sporting events with this man, watching our sons play. We grieved his death.

Oh, we knew he was with the Lord, but there was no time for grief in that service either. I felt bad for the son because when it came time for him and his sister to get up and walk down the aisle back in front of all the people, the boy needed release. And he got it.

I thought it was Niagara Falls. He just wept. Water came crashing out of his eyes.

It was remarkable. He needed that release, which was not provided. There was no not yet in that.

Yes, he was with the Lord, and that is to be rejoiced. Yes, in that sense, death is overcome. But no, there's a body there.

And that's sick because death is the last enemy. 1 Corinthians 15:26, as we saw. And it is not yet finally overcome.

So, there should be a time to mourn at a funeral. Only mourn? Of course, not only mourn. A Christian funeral is bittersweet.

I'm not even emphasizing the bitter. I'm just saying it should be a part, you should say. And we miss our dear brother.

We are sad he left his wife and his children. And we loved him and enjoyed him. And where it's good for him right now.

But we're a bit of a mess. Just like that is enough. Of course, you praise the Lord and you, and you rejoice in his being with the Lord.

And you look to the future and the not yet and the resurrection and so forth. But oh my goodness, that is warped. Rather, a Christian funeral should be bitter.

Oh, not even primarily, but bitter. Sweet. Indeed, the church and individual believers live in the tension between the already fulfilled and the not-yet still to be fulfilled promises of God.

As a result, we're realistic. We don't euphemize death. We don't deny death.

Oh, death is natural. Death is not natural. Death is unnatural, as we will see in our very next lecture of this series.

This is Dr. Robert A. Peterson in his teaching on Doctrines of the Church and Last Things. This is session 11, Last Things Introduction, Two Ages, Kingdom of God, Already and Not Yet.