

Dr. Tiberius Rata, Old Testament Theology,

Session 6, God as King

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This is Dr. Tiberius Rata in his teaching on Old Testament Theology. This is session 6, God as King.

Hello everybody. Today, we're going to talk about God as King. So, God reveals himself as Creator. He reveals himself as the Covenant Maker and Covenant Keeper God. He reveals himself as the Redeemer of his people.

He reveals himself as a Lawgiver. But he also reveals himself as a King. Now, the word King or Malak in Hebrew is very basic to Semitic thinking.

All Semitic peoples thought of their gods as kings. So sometimes, this is where we get the idea that the king was God and God was king. So, they had the same idea as other people groups in the ancient Near East.

But it's different when we talk about Yahweh as king. The term denotes more than simply the head of a monarchical state. It can mean a prince or a leader.

But when we talk about the Old Testament, the term king is applied to Yahweh 42 times in the Old Testament. And again, this is a very important concept. The kingship of Yahweh relates to his sovereign acts on behalf of his people through all times.

And we talked about earlier that Israel was supposed to be a theocracy. People ruled by Theos, by God. Later, obviously, they became a monarchy.

In the covenant formula, I will be their God and they will be my people. That points not just to God wanting to be a covenant-making and covenant-keeping God, but also portrays God as the king. Because we talked about covenants being suzerain treaties.

Well, when God makes a covenant, he makes it from a suzerain perspective. So he's not just the covenant-making God; he's actually the king. And that goes earlier in the book of Genesis.

So, Yahweh's kingship relates to the past, present, and future. In other words, there was not a time when Yahweh was not king. That's very important because some people suggest that this idea of God being king was copied from other nations where they had enthroned on festivals and they would enthrone their kings as gods.

And they say, well, Israel did the same thing; they copied from the other nations. But that's not what the Bible says. There was never a time when Yahweh was not king.

And the book of Psalms is clear about that. But we actually have it the earliest of times that we have it in the book of Exodus after the Exodus event. The Exodus event happens in chapter 14, but then in the song of Moses, he starts, I will sing to the Lord for he has triumphed gloriously.

The horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea. The Lord is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation. This is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and exalt him.

The Lord is a man of word, and the Lord is his name. And then verse 18, the Lord will reign forever and ever. So, the kingship of Yahweh again does not have a beginning or an end.

The psalmist recounts that in Psalm 97, the Lord reigns forever; he has established his throne for judgment. 101:6, the Lord is king forever and ever, and the nations will perish from his land. Psalm 93, the Lord reigns, he is robed in majesty.

Psalm 96 says that among the nations, the Lord reigns. 97, the Lord reigns, let the earth be glad, let the distant shores rejoice. The Lord reigns, let the nations tremble, he sits enthroned between the cherubim, let the earth shake.

This is a Lachish relief. We see Sennacherib on his throne. He is supported by 12 men, and he has a footstool on which he rests his feet.

This idea also appears in the Psalms, where a king has a footstool for his feet. Psalm 146, 10, the Lord reigns forever and ever. 1 Chronicles 16, the Lord reigns.

Even in the prophets, we come and see Zechariah 49, and the Lord will be king over all the earth. Obviously, this is an eschatological passage that talks about Christ's second coming. On that day, there will be one Lord, and his name is the only name.

So again, this is a very clear idea in the Old Testament about God being king. But the question for today is, then, how is that relating to the kingdom of God? Well, if there is a kingdom, that means there is a king. And if there is a king, there is a kingdom.

The kingdom of God does not have boundaries. Just like he doesn't have a beginning and an end as king, there are no boundaries to this kingdom. In other words, this kingdom is universal.

It is very important to understand when we talk about God's kingdom because when we understand God's kingdom, we understand more about God being king. In other

words, the kingdom of God definitely encounters more than just the nation of Israel. Remember, with the promises given to Abraham, God was blessing Abraham, but through Abraham, all the families of the earth shall be blessed through Abraham.

That was God's plan from the beginning. And in the prophets, we see the same idea. Again, Isaiah, speaking about the end times, says clearly that God's kingdom will include not only the nation of Israel but all the families of the earth.

That's why he says Jeremiah says the same thing. God's kingdom is universal. At that time, they will call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord, and all the nations will gather in Jerusalem to honor the name of the Lord.

No longer will they follow the stubbornness of their evil hearts. Zechariah 8, again, the post-exilic prophet. This is what the Lord Almighty says, So the kingdom of God is universal, contains all the families of the earth.

The righteousness of God's kingdom speaks to the fact that the Lord will cleanse his people so their righteousness will be their characteristic. Sometimes, we go to church, and we sing that song, come just as you are, and sometimes, again, we use it to justify our state. But yeah, come just as you are, but when you come to God, He will change you.

He will transform you. And the same thing, when you come into the kingdom of God, He changes you. He removes you from the kingdom of darkness and removes you into the kingdom of His Son.

And that changes because the Lord cleanses His people, so their righteousness will be their key characteristic. Isaiah 1, And remove all your impurities. I will restore your judges in the days of old, your counselors at the beginning.

Afterward, you will be called a city of righteousness, the faithful city. So, God can take a corrupt city and make it a city of righteousness. Through Jeremiah, he says the same thing.

In his days, Judah would be saved, and Israel would live in safety. And this is the name by which you will be called. The Lord is our righteousness.

We talked about this when we talked about the new covenant. How can the new covenant be in our hearts? How does God do that? It's through the Spirit. And in Ezekiel, it says, I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean.

I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you. I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.

See, what's different with us now is that we are part of God's kingdom by being his sons and daughters. But what he gives us in the meantime, he gives us his Holy Spirit. What is the main characteristic of the Holy Spirit? That he is holy.

So, when you come into the kingdom, he makes you holy. We begin this process called sanctification. Very, very important process.

It's not a one-time deal, but it is a long process. And that is a key characteristic of the kingdom of God. Not just that, it's universal, it's for all people, and it's available to all people.

But that righteousness is its main characteristic. The Bible also speaks about the fact that the kingdom of God is characterized by peace. Peace is sometimes described as the absence of war.

And again, Isaiah speaks about an eschatological time. Again, an end time when there will be their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war no more.

Well, obviously, we never had a time of peace in our history. So, this has not yet been fulfilled. This will happen around Christ's second coming.

Actually, Isaiah speaks about peace in the animal kingdom. Which, again, it's a miracle in itself. The wolf will live with the lamb, and the leopard will lie down with the goat.

The calf, the lion, the yearling, and a little child will lead them. The cow will feed with the bear, and the young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. Well, obviously, this has not yet been fulfilled.

So again, this expects fulfillment around Christ's second coming. There is a return of the paradise-like age. As Hosea writes, in that day, the mountains will drip new wine, and the hills will flow with milk.

All the ravens of Judah will run with water. A fountain will flow out of the Lord's house and will water the valley of Acacias. But we have to ask ourselves if God is king, what role does the Messiah play? The Scandinavian scholar Mowinckel says Messiah is the representative of Yahweh in his kingdom in whom Yahweh is present and through whom he acts.

Now, sometimes, this Messiah doesn't necessarily refer to Jesus but refers to an anointed one, for example, King David. But when we go into the New Testament portion of this, which we need, if we look at God as king, we need to see that the

kingdom of God is also in the present. When Jesus comes, when the Messiah comes, he proclaims and says, the time has come; repent; the kingdom of God is near.

Repent and believe the good news. So, the kingdom of God was a very important part of Jesus' ministry, and he was trying to show them that he was the king. Now, they didn't get it, and even at the crucifixion, they tried to mock him, to put on the cross, this is the king of the Jews.

But really, what they were doing, they were actually proclaiming exactly the truth, that he was the king of the Jews. In talking about universality, John tells us that the inscription was in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. Jesus was the king, and he proclaimed that from the beginning.

But the kingdom of God is different than what people were thinking about. Again, the king was different. Remember what the Israelites or the Jews were thinking, okay, here we're going to get a commander-in-chief, who's going to defeat the Romans, and he's going to do battle with them, and we're going to be freed.

And Jesus comes and says, no, that's not the kind of king that I am. Remember John's inquiry from prison, are you the one? And this is how Jesus responds: the blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor, blessed is the man who does not fall on account of me. Now, sometimes we see signs of the kingdom of God outwardly, but sometimes we see signs of the kingdom of God as an inward phenomenon.

In Luke 17, once having been asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, the kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation. Nor will people say, here it is, or There it is because the kingdom of God is within you. So again, some people are expecting to see things, great things, but a lot of times, the kingdom of God, God, does work in our own hearts, and that's why you cannot calculate this.

But there's also an element of the future of the kingdom of God. Even in the Lord's Prayer, Jesus teaches us how to pray. He says, our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, you will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

So, is the kingdom here or not? Well, according to Jesus, it is here, but not yet. So, you have this already/not-yet concept that has been developed in eschatology. Yes, when Jesus clearly says, the kingdom of God is within you, it's there already, but there is an element of the kingdom that's not yet here.

That's why Jesus teaches us how to pray, your kingdom come. Some people like to pray; what's at the end of the book of Revelation, come to Lord Jesus. Well, that's what they're praying for.

They're praying for the fulfillment of the kingdom to be here. Jesus talks about a feast that will happen in the kingdom of God. And again, in the book of Revelation, it's clear that you have the marriage feast of the Lamb.

So, there's a whole big party over there. But when Jesus talks about the kingdom, he sometimes speaks about this feast. I say to you that many will come from the east and west and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.

But the subject of the kingdom will be thrown outside into darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. So, there is an element of feasting, again, as we see also in the book of Revelation. But this is not a universal kingdom in the sense that this is not universalism, where everybody will be saved.

No, no. This is a clear indication that some will go into eternal life with Christ, and some will go into eternal life apart from Christ. The subject of the kingdom will be thrown outside into darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, which is an expression used by Jesus when he talks about hell.

So, how do you get into the kingdom of God? Well, it's not as they thought. Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only who does the will of the Father who is in heaven. Jesus looked around and said to his disciples how hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God.

Some people thought they could buy their way into the kingdom. Some people think they could earn their way into the kingdom. But we know that the only way into the kingdom is to accept Christ the King as our sovereign and to submit to his authority.

Sometimes, people portray Jesus in a corner and, oh, please accept Jesus as your Lord and Savior. No, Jesus is the Lord, and Jesus is the Savior, and he is the King. The question is, am I going to submit under his authority or not? And if I do, then I am part of his kingdom, and he is my king, and he is my Lord and Savior.

In the Gospel of Matthew, Matthew uses the term the kingdom of heaven, but he refers to the same thing. So again, the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God are kingdoms that don't have boundaries and are the places where God is king and God is king. The question is, are we going to submit under his authority? Everybody has to make that personal decision.

But remember, Yahweh is king, God is king. He doesn't have a beginning, he doesn't have an end. His kingdom does not have a beginning and it does not have an end.

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