

THE CRUCIFIED KING: ATONEMENT AND KINGDOM  
IN BIBLICAL AND SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

---

JEREMY R. TREAT

## LESSON 1: THE KINGDOM AND THE CROSS

---

Perspectives on the atonement have been offered from all over the world, but the voice of the man closest to the cross of Christ has rarely been heard (Luke 23:42). How could this thief view a beaten, bloodied, and crucified criminal as one who rules over a kingdom? Maybe he was confused by the title “King of the Jews” on Jesus’ cross, or by the crown of thorns on his head. Or perhaps, as Jesus’ response indicates, this man rightly saw the kingdom of God in the crucified Christ.

This series seeks to provide an answer to the following basic question: What is the biblical and theological relationship between the coming of the kingdom of God and the atoning death of Christ on the cross? As we will see, the answer lies ultimately in Jesus, the crucified king, as properly understood within the story and logic of redemption.

### 1. THE KINGDOM OR THE CROSS?

- a. Beneath the surface of this question lies the problem of the separation of the kingdom and the cross in the church, as well as in the academy. Some champion the kingdom and others cling to the cross, usually one to the exclusion of the other.
- b. Why has such a rift developed between two of Scripture’s most important motifs?
  - i. The wedge driven between kingdom and cross is largely the result of reactionary debates between those who emphasize the kingdom and those who focus on the cross.
    1. The high point of these debates was the collision between the social gospel movement and the ensuing conservative response.
    2. Walter Rauschenbusch, drawing from 19<sup>th</sup>-century German liberalism, advocated the kingdom of God to the exclusion of substitutionary atonement.
    3. Conservatives reacted sharply by reclaiming the centrality of the cross, often relegating the kingdom solely to the future or ignoring it altogether.
    4. The result is a false dichotomy – either the kingdom without the cross, or the cross without the kingdom – that truncates the gospel.
  - ii. The fragmentation of Scripture that has occurred since the Enlightenment has contributed greatly to the severing of kingdom and cross.
    1. If the Bible is not a unified whole, then there is no need to integrate the seemingly incompatible ideas that God reigns and the Son of God dies.
  - iii. The kingdom-cross divide is widened by the “ugly ditch” between biblical studies and systematic theology.
    1. Systematic theology has given great attention to the doctrine of the atonement but has largely ignored the kingdom of God. The field of

- biblical studies is dominated by the theme of the kingdom of God and yet gives less attention to the doctrine of the atonement.
- iv. Kingdom and cross have not been integrated because the Gospels have largely been withheld as a source for theology.
    1. The Gospel writers, once assumed to be mere historians, are now acknowledged to be theologians, interpreting Christ's ministry by the way in which they tell the story, especially as it fulfills the narrative of Israel from the Old Testament.
  - v. Kingdom and cross have been difficult to relate because of the oversystematizing of certain doctrines, such as the states (humiliation/exaltation) and offices (priest, prophet, king) of Christ.
    1. If Christ's work is divided neatly into the two categories of humiliation and exaltation, with the cross being only in the state of humiliation, it is difficult to see how it could relate to the kingdom at all.
    2. If Christ's death is interpreted only in terms of His priestly office, then it will be difficult to connect the cross to the kingdom.
  - vi. If one has a mistaken view of the kingdom or the cross respectively, then properly relating the two will be impossible.
    1. If the cross is understood solely in terms of personal salvation and the kingdom as future eschatology, then the two will never meet.
    2. If the kingdom is thought to be a utopian place and the cross an eschatological event, then they will be equally difficult to relate.

## 2. HISTORY OF INTERPRETATION

- a. Although there has always been confusion with or resistance to the paradox of kingdom and cross, such a stark division has not always been the case.
  - i. In the first century, Barnabas declared that "the kingdom of Jesus is based on the wooden cross."
  - ii. According to Augustine, "The Lord has established His sovereignty from a tree. Who is it who fights with wood? Christ. From His cross He has conquered kings."
  - iii. Luther chastises those who "cannot harmonize the two ideas – that Christ should be the King of Kings and that He should also suffer and be executed."
  - iv. These representative quotes, along with the reasons above for the kingdom-cross divide, reveal that this division is an essentially modern (post-Enlightenment) problem.
- b. Among contemporary debates, the two most controversial approaches to the atonement are penal substitution and Christus Victor, each offering a different view of what Christ accomplished on the cross.

- i. Christus Victor emphasizes the cross as victory and the restoration of God's reign over the cosmos.
- ii. Penal substitution focuses on the reconciliation of God's people.

### 3. BIBLICAL AND SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

- a. Biblical and systematic theology have been in happy union throughout most of church history.
  - i. In 1787, however, J. P. Gabler drove a wedge between the two disciplines, arguing for biblical theology as a strictly historical enterprise to be conducted apart from the church's theological biases.
  - ii. This separation between biblical and systematic theology was cemented in academia by the development of the German university system and largely persists today under the assertion that biblical theology focuses on what the Bible meant, and systematic theology focuses on what the Bible means.
- b. How do we define biblical and systematic theology in comparison to one another? The key is that both draw from the same source of Scripture, yet have different emphases.
  - i. Biblical theology emphasizes the unity of Scripture through the unfolding history of redemption or, the development of the plot in its story line.
  - ii. Systematic theology seeks to understand the unity of Scripture through the logic of its theology and the way in which individual doctrines fit together as a logical whole.
  - iii. However, neither discipline can neglect the focuses of the other.
  - iv. Biblical theology's aim is to set forth the theology of the Bible in its own terms, concepts, and contexts.
  - v. Systematic theology seeks not only to understand the theology of the Bible, but to bring it into conversation with the tradition of the church and contemporary theology in order to communicate sound doctrine and correct false doctrine.
- c. Biblical and systematic theology also have relation to, and enrich one another.
  - i. Biblical theology enriches systematic theology by reminding it of:
    - 1. The redemptive-historical nature of revelation
    - 2. The need for actual exegesis of the texts used
    - 3. The systematizing process already beginning to take place within Scripture
  - ii. Systematic theology enriches biblical theology by further developing and informing it.

## LESSON 2: BIBLICAL THEOLOGY – THE KINGDOM ESTABLISHED BY THE CROSS, PART 1

---

The Old Testament (especially Isa 40-55) provides the proper framework for understanding the kingdom-cross relationship in the New Testament. The significance of the Old Testament is especially evident in Israel's story of victory through sacrifice, concepts such as covenant and temple, and fulfillment in Christ.

### 1. KINGDOM-CROSS RELATIONSHIP IN THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS

#### a. THE STORY OF VICTORY THROUGH SACRIFICE

- i. Gen 1-2 presents a project aimed at God's glorious reign over all the earth through the vice-regency of His servants.
- ii. After the fall, the kingdom project graciously continues, but it will now come through the seed of a woman who, though being wounded, will crush the head of the serpent (Gen 3:15).
- iii. As various seeds fail to bring about the fulfillment of God's design on earth, the prophets point forward to an eschatological seed who will bring about royal victory through atoning suffering (Isa 52:13-53:12).
- iv. The NT does not present an isolated story of Jesus, but one that is the fulfillment of this story.
  1. Jesus is the "yes" to every promise of the OT (2 Cor 1:20).
  2. Jesus is the promised seed (Gal 3:16) and the prophesied servant (Lk 22:37), who crushes the serpent and restores the Edenic harmony between God and His people, as well as their commission to Edenize the earth for the glory of God.
- v. From the bruised heel to the reigning Lamb (Rev 22:1), the Bible is a redemptive story of a crucified Messiah who will establish God's kingdom on earth through His atoning death on the cross.

#### b. COVENANT AND THE KINGDOM-CROSS RELATIONSHIP

- i. Covenant is the binding relationship between a king and his servants and is therefore at the heart of the coming kingdom of God.
  1. Redemptive-historically, God administers His kingdom through the covenants.
- ii. The New Covenant of God's kingdom is itself brought about by the blood of Christ as the Passover Lamb (Mt 26:28; cf Lk 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25; also Ex 24:8; Jer 31:31-34; Zech 9:11).
- iii. The kingdom is established at the cross, where Jesus sheds His blood as the mediator of a new covenant, thereby restoring the right relationship between the divine king and His servants.

### c. TEMPLE AND THE KINGDOM-CROSS RELATIONSHIP

- i. In the creation narrative, Eden is depicted as a temple and its priest-kings receive the task of expanding God's kingdom.
- ii. This connection between temple and kingdom is replicated in the kingdom of Israel, where the temple functions as the dwelling place of the holy king and as the means of atonement and forgiveness for the servants of the king.
- iii. God's reigning over and through his people is inseparable from His dwelling with them.
  1. When God establishes the Davidic kingdom, the king is to build a temple for God (2 Sam 7:13).
  2. Jesus' proclamation of the coming of God's kingdom (Mk 1:14-15) entailed His own replacement of the temple (Jn 2:19).
  3. On the cross, Jesus is depicted as king (Mk 15:32), and the destruction of the old temple is indicated by the tearing of the veil (Mk 15:38).

## 2. THE PROMISES OF THE KINGDOM FULFILLED IN THE CROSS

### a. VICTORY OVER EVIL

- i. Scripture is clear and repetitious that it is through Christ's death that Satan has been defeated (Jn 12:31; Col 2:13-15; Heb 2:14; Rev 12:10-11).
- ii. "The cross represents the climactic victory of the kingdom of God. God's rule was disrupted by human rebellion and all that came with it: demonic power, sickness, suffering, pain, and death – every kind of evil. The root of all opposition to God's rule was human rebellion, and that could be destroyed only at the cross." – Craig Bartholomew

### b. NEW EXODUS

- i. All of Christ's work is to be interpreted within the framework of the new exodus.
- ii. As the Passover Lamb and Suffering Servant, Jesus brings His people out of slavery by ransoming them into the kingdom of God.
- iii. Beyond Mark, Christ's death as a new exodus is evident, wherever it is discussed, in terms of "redemption" (Rom 3:24; Eph 1:7; Titus 2:14; Heb 9:12).

### c. FORGIVENESS OF SINS

#### i. The Wrath of God and the Coming of God's Kingdom

1. The wrath-bearing nature of Jesus' death is essential for the coming of the kingdom.
2. In the Old Testament, the coming of God's kingdom entailed the pouring out of His wrath (Ezek 20:33; cf Ps 59:13; Jer 10:10).
3. Eschatologically, the prophets spoke of the Day of Yahweh as the coming of both wrath and mercy under the kingship of Yahweh.

4. Did Jesus bear God's wrath on the cross?
  - a. Jesus predicts He will be rejected (Mk 8:31), a word also used in the LXX for God's rejection of Israel and as an equivalent for His wrath (Jer 6:30; 7:29; 8:9; 14:19).
  - b. Jesus predicts He will be delivered over to the nations (Mk 10:33; cf 15:1), a phrase in the OT equivalent to being handed over to the wrath of God (Lev 26:32-33, 38; cf Ps 106:41; Ezra 9:7; Hos 8:10).
  - c. Jesus' interpretation of His death as drinking the cup (Mk 10:38-39; 14:36) is an OT symbol of God's wrath (Ps 11:6; 75:8; Isa 51:17, 22; Ezek 23:31-34; Hab 2:16).
  - d. Jews and Romans agreed that to die by crucifixion is to die under God's curse (Deut 21:22-23).
  - e. Just as Jesus was mocked throughout the crucifixion, the mockery suffered by the righteous in the Psalms can be viewed as the wrath of God (Ps 39; 79; 102).
  - f. The darkness during the crucifixion (Mk 15:33) represents God's wrath (Ex 10:21; Amos 8:9-10; Mk 13:24).
  - g. To be forsaken by God (Mk 15:34) is to be under the wrath of God.
  - h. Jesus died, which is significant because death itself is the manifestation of God's wrath.
- ii. Forgiveness of Sins and the Coming of God's Kingdom
  1. Just as the kingdom of Israel required the sacrificial system to atone for and forgive sin, the coming kingdom of God would deal with sin once and for all.
  2. The forgiveness of sins was not an isolated aspect of the kingdom of God, but deeply intertwined with the rest.
    - a. Isa 40:1-2 and Zech 13:1-2 both place the forgiveness of sins and the defeat of evil side by side, being brought about by Him whom they have pierced (Zech 12:10), and by Him who was pierced for our transgressions (Isa 53:5).
    - b. God's kingdom includes the forgiveness of sins because its king has authority on earth to forgive sins (Mk 2:10).

## LESSON 3: BIBLICAL THEOLOGY – THE KINGDOM ESTABLISHED BY THE CROSS, PART 2

---

### 1. THE DISTINCT AND INSEPARABLE ROLES OF THE KINGDOM AND THE CROSS

#### a. THE KINGDOM IS TELIC

- i. The kingdom is the final goal of history, the telos of creation and redemption – it is the kingdom of God toward which all history moves.
- ii. The telic nature of the kingdom is especially evident in the two-age scheme of Second Temple Judaism.
  1. The NT refers to these ages primarily as the present evil age (Gal 1:4; cf Rom 12:2; 1 Cor 1:20; 2:6-8; 3:18; 2 Cor 4:4), and the age to come (Mt 12:32; Mk 10:30; Lk 18:30; Heb 6:5; cf Eph 1:21).
  2. The coming of the kingdom is the coming of the end, when God finally puts all things right under His reign.

#### b. THE CROSS IS CENTRAL

- i. Christ's atoning death is an eschatological event in an unfolding drama of redemption.
- ii. Matthew encompasses the moment of Christ's death with numerous signs that the end of the age has come.
  1. Darkness covers the land as a sign of apocalyptic judgment (Mt 27:45; cf Ex 10:22; Isa 13:9-16; Jer 4:27-28; 15:9; Joel 2:10; Amos 5:18, 20; 8:9-10).
  2. The temple veil is torn in two, marking the destruction of the temple and universal availability of God's presence (Mt 27:51; cf Mt 24:2; Jn 4:20-24).
  3. The earth quakes as a sign of God's end-time judgment (Mt 27:51; cf Isa 24:18-20; Jer 51:29; Ezek 38:20; Mt 24:7).
  4. The resurrection of the dead recalls the hope for the end-time resurrection of the dead (Mt 27:52; cf Dan 12:1-2; Zech 14:4-5; Jn 11:24).
  5. A Gentile confesses Jesus as the Son of God, which for Matthew is a sign of the universal scope of the gospel in the last days (Mt 27:54; cf Mt 8:5-13; 21:43; 22:1-14).
- iii. The cross is not only the end of one age, but is itself the very transition to another.
- iv. The eschatological understanding of the cross as the turn of the ages is also attested to outside the Gospels.
  1. For Paul, the cross demonstrates that the end of the ages has broken into the middle of history, for the old has passed and the new has come (Gal 1:3-4; 3:13-16; 6:14-16; Eph 2:14-16).

2. The author of Hebrews declares that Christ has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself (Heb 9:26).

v. The cross of the resurrected Christ, therefore, falls precisely in the middle of the two ages of redemptive history, and it is in this capacity that we can speak of the centrality of the cross.

## 2. THE GREAT EXCHANGE EFFECTS THE GREAT TRANSITION

a. By dealing with humanity's sin, God reconciles His servant-kings to Himself and reestablishes His reign through them over the earth.

b. Gal 6:14-16 reveals that the cross is essential for the eschatological new creation.

c. Gal 3:10-14 is the clearest explanation of how Christ's atoning death brings about the transition to the new age.

i. In Gal 3:13, Jesus takes the place of sinners, bearing the curse of the law and thereby bringing about redemption.

ii. In Gal 3:14, the substitutionary-atoning death of Christ is tied to the age of blessings promised to Abraham (Gal 3:14; cf. Gen 12:1-3).

## 3. GOD'S KINGDOM ESTABLISHED BY CHRIST'S CROSS

### a. THE MEANING OF "ESTABLISH"

i. In the OT, the word is used frequently in relation to earthly kingdoms and specifically to the messianic kingdom. It technically means to set up, fix, or make firm.

1. For example, although David was anointed as king (1 Sam 16:13; 2 Sam 2:3-4; 5:3), his reign was not established until he defeated the inhabitants of Jerusalem (2 Sam 5:6-12).

ii. More specifically, God promises to establish the messianic kingdom (2 Sam 7:12-14; Isa 9:6-7).

1. It is established by God rather than people (2 Sam 7:12-13; 1 Chr 14:2; 17:12-14; 22:10; 28:7; 2 Chr 17:5; Isa 9:7).

2. It is established on earth as it already is in heaven (Job 38:33; Ps 9:7; 93:2; 103:19).

3. It is established for eternity rather than one generation (2 Sam 7:16; 1 Kgs 2:45; 1 Chr 17:12-14; 22:10; 28:7; Isa 9:7).

4. It is established by justice, righteousness, and steadfast love (Isa 9:7; 16:5; cf. Prov 16:12; 25:5).

iii. To say, therefore, that the cross establishes God's reign is to affirm Christ's death as the decisive moment when God's reign is irreversibly fixed on earth as it is in heaven, within the broader movement of the coming of God's kingdom in Christ's life, death, resurrection, ascension, Pentecost, and the Second Coming.

b. THE CROSS WITHIN THE BROADER SPECTRUM OF CHRIST'S WORK

- i. The cross is inseparable from the other aspects of Christ's work and incomprehensible apart from them.
  1. The kingdom of God is present through Christ's incarnation, glimpsed in His miracles/exorcisms, explained by His teaching, established in His death, inaugurated by His resurrection, and advanced through His ascension and His sending of the Spirit, and it will be consummated at His Second Coming.
- ii. The connection between the cross and resurrection is particularly significant.
  1. The resurrection is the firstfruits of the new creation (1 Cor 15:20; cf Col 1:15; Rev 3:14), while the cross is what brings about the transition and therefore the tree that produces the fruit.
  2. If Jesus remains in the tomb, all is for nothing (1 Cor 15:17). By his resurrection Jesus has inaugurated the end-time reign of God through His servant-kings over a new creation.

c. REIGNING BY SERVING

- i. The kingdom and the cross are often held apart because Christ as king and Christ as servant are seemingly incompatible.
  1. Scripture's general usage of the terms king and servant are not incompatible.
    - a. Abraham's servant is the ruler of his household (Gen 24:2).
    - b. David is a servant and a king (2 Sam 7:8).
    - c. In Isaiah, the messianic king accomplishes his royal task as a servant (Isa 52:13-53:12).
    - d. In Mark, Jesus maintains His royal privilege but says he will rule not by wielding worldly power, but by serving (Mark 10:42-45).
- ii. To reign is to exercise royal power in order to effectively achieve the desired goal, whether by forceful or servile means.
  1. Jesus' way of reigning by serving can be seen in the mockers' request for Jesus to display His kingship by coming down from the cross (Mk 15:29-32).

d. THE STORY OF CHRIST CRUCIFIED (HEB 2:5-10)

- i. This passage sets forth the primary message of Hebrews by discussing God's royal intent for creation, its apparent failure due to human sin, and its true realization in Christ's death on the cross.
- ii. While all those under Adam have fallen short of their royal destiny, there is a new Adam – Jesus – who has been crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death (2:9).

1. God's design for humankind finds its realization in Jesus Christ. What the world was created for has been regained in Christ.
  2. The way the Son of Man accomplishes this act of restoration is unthinkable through the suffering of death. It is the means that God in His ultimate wisdom chose (2:10).
  - iii. Jesus, as the new Adam, has restored God's design for creation and regained the crown of glory and honor (2:7) for humanity through His death on the cross.
- e. THE WISDOM OF CHRIST CRUCIFIED (1 COR 1:18-2:5)
- i. Paul here contrasts human wisdom with the deepest logic of the gospel, demonstrating that Christ crucified is the power of God and the wisdom of God.
    1. The natural person looks at the cross through the wisdom of the world and sees folly.
    2. The spiritual person looks at the cross through the wisdom of God and sees power.
    3. The cross shatters all fallen human notions of power and reveals a God who chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise (1 Cor 1:27).
  - ii. How does the divine wisdom of Christ crucified inform our understanding of kingdom and cross?
    1. Paul uses power and wisdom, which are traditionally royal characteristics (Ps 145:11; Dan 2:37), to define the message of the cross.
    2. Paul uses power to describe both the cross (1 Cor 1:18) and the kingdom (4:20).
    3. In a similar way, in the book of Revelation the slain Lamb is praised for His power and wisdom (Rev 5:12).
    4. The kingdom of God comes in power, but the power of the gospel is Christ crucified.
  - iii. God created the world with wisdom, so it should be no surprise that he would also redeem it with wisdom (Prov 8:22-31; Col 1:15-20; 2:3).
    1. God promised in Isaiah that He would destroy the wisdom of the wise (Isa 29:14).
    2. Jesus confronted such human wisdom in His disciples who sought a kingdom without a cross (Mk 8:29-33).
    3. God put His wisdom on display as He sent His Son to the cross to be crucified for the sins of the world.
    4. Throughout redemptive history, it has been God's wise plan of establishing His kingdom through the crucifixion of His Messiah.

## LESSON 4: SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY – CHRIST: THE KING ON THE CROSS, PART 1

---

Throughout His incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension, Jesus is king. There is, however, still a process of Jesus' becoming king, a development in His kingship. In order to further explore the kingship of Jesus, two areas must be addressed: the distinction between Jesus' divine and human kingship, and the Old Testament process of becoming king.

### 1. THE KINGSHIP OF CHRIST ON THE CROSS

#### a. JESUS THE KING

- i. As the divine Son of God, Jesus is king – yesterday, today, and forever.
  1. “Enthronement cannot mean acquiring an honour or jurisdiction not previously possessed; indeed, the kingly rule of the Son is not some accidental status or role external to His being, but rather is what He is: He is king.” – John Webster
  2. As a human, a second Adam, a descendant of David, Jesus came in the likeness of sinful flesh with the task of restoring human viceregency over all the earth.
  3. Therefore, while Jesus is king as the divine Son of God, His human kingship is a process of establishing His father's throne on earth as it is in heaven. Thus, His human kingship is grounded in His divine kingship.
- ii. The OT provides the proper background for the process of becoming a king.
  1. In biblical times, becoming a king was a process, the high points of which were anointing and enthronement (or establishing the king's throne with victory).
  2. Anointing, however, is the distinctive act in the enthronement process because it is what affects the identity of the anointed one.
    - a. To be anointed as king is to be authorized by God as the chosen ruler, bringing about a change of status.
    - b. Anointing the king serves the greater purpose of establishing His kingdom.
  3. This background reveals several features of Christ's human kingship.
    - a. Jesus' baptism is His public anointing to kingship. Jesus is declared to be God's beloved Son, the anointed one of Ps 2.
    - b. In the baptism, Jesus is not only declared the royal son of God, He is also empowered by the Holy Spirit to carry out His messianic mission of establishing God's kingdom (Mk 1:9-11; cf 2 Sam 7:12-14; Ps 2; Isa 42:1).

- i. Jesus, therefore, approached the cross as a king seeking to establish His kingdom.
  - iii. Although Jesus is king before the cross, there yet remains something to be done for His kingship.
    - 1. As the second Adam, Jesus must dethrone the unrightful king of the fallen creation in order to establish His throne over the new creation.
  - iv. In sum, before the cross Jesus is king in at least two senses:
    - 1. As the divine Son of God in union with the Father
    - 2. As the human publicly anointed as king in His baptism
  - v. Yet, before the cross Jesus is not king in two senses:
    - 1. He has yet to definitely defeat Satan and establish God's kingdom.
    - 2. He has yet to restore human viceregency.
  - vi. Therefore, there is an already-not yet quality to His kingship. Before the cross, He is already king, but He is yet to establish His kingdom.
- b. CROSS AND RESURRECTION
  - i. The resurrection is not the beginning, but the revelation of Christ's kingship and the inauguration of His kingdom on earth.
    - 1. Jesus' death is not a defeat that needs to be made right by the resurrection, but a victory that needs to be revealed and implemented in the resurrection.
  - ii. Christ's session (sitting at the right hand of the Father) is not the beginning of His reign but the completion of His earthly task and continuation of His reign through the Spirit.
- c. JESUS REIGNS FROM THE CROSS
  - i. The reign of Christ from the cross emphasizes the active nature of His atoning death.
    - 1. Active and passive obedience, while often wrongly divided among Christ's life and death, are complementary aspects throughout Christ's work.
    - 2. The cross, therefore, is the pinnacle of Christ's obedience (Phil 2:6-8) in both its passive and aspects.
    - 3. He obediently fulfills His mission of bringing the kingdom (active) by means of obediently suffering as a servant (passive; Jn 10:18; cf 19:30).
  - ii. The fathers of the early church championed the kingship of Christ in all things, especially His atoning death on the cross.
    - 1. Justin Martyr promoted the phrase, "The Lord hath reigned from the tree."
    - 2. Irenaeus says, "He whom the Jews had seen as a man, and had fastened to the cross, should be preached as the Christ, the Son of God, their eternal King."

3. Early artistic portrayals of the crucifixion often place a golden crown on Jesus' head.
4. This tradition of Christ reigning from the cross was also preserved through the theologically rich hymnody of the early church.

## LESSON 5: SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY – CHRIST: THE KING ON THE CROSS, PART 2

---

### 1. THE TWO STATES OF CHRIST: HUMILIATION AND EXALTATION

#### a. A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE STATES OF CHRIST

- i. The distinction between Christ's states of humiliation and exaltation was first used by the Lutherans in the late sixteenth century and developed in the ensuing debates with the Reformed.
  1. The Lutherans, seeking to uphold the union of Christ's two natures by means of the *communicatio idiomatum* (communication of properties), interpreted the exaltation of the human nature of Christ as the revelation of His previously possessed divine glory.
  2. The Reformed criticized the Lutherans for wrongly divinizing Christ's humanity and therefore sought to explain the exaltation in terms of the rewarding of Christ's newly gained human glory.

### 2. EXALTATION IN HUMILIATION: INTEGRATING THE STATES

#### a. EXALTATION BEFORE THE RESURRECTION

- i. The life of Jesus is clearly one of humiliation. However, Scripture reveals that even during His time of humiliation He is being exalted, glorified, and enthroned as king.
  1. Far from being reserved for His resurrection and ascension, the glory of Christ is displayed from the moment of the incarnation (Jn 1:14; 2:11; 2 Pet 1:17).
  2. In the transfiguration, the disciples were given a preview of what would be fully revealed in the resurrection (Lk 9:32).
  3. Jesus refers to His own death as the hour for Him to be glorified (Jn 12:23) and lifted up (Jn 12:32), combining glorification and exaltation and centering them on the cross.
- ii. Rightly understanding the person of Christ is essential for His pre-Easter exaltation.
  1. In accordance with the Council of Chalcedon, Jesus is not only truly God and truly man, but His two natures are united in His one person – the hypostatic union.
    - a. This means that He as the God-man is exalted and glorious in His divinity. The majestic glory of Christ's divinity was by no means absent from His person during His ministry on earth.
    - b. His humanity need not be incorporated into His divinity (the Lutheran tendency), nor treated in isolation from His divinity (the Reformed tendency), but in union with it.

- c. Christ is also exalted before the resurrection in His human nature. Although truly human, Jesus was not just any human.
  - d. Christ's kingship is attributed primarily to His humanity.
- b. HUMILIATION AFTER THE CROSS
  - i. Although His atoning sacrifice is finished (Jn 19:30) and need not be repeated (Heb 9:26), His identity and reign continue to be shaped by His servant form and work on the cross.
    - 1. Even after His resurrection, He remains the crucified one (Mk 16:6) and appears to His disciples in His glorified state still bearing the scars from the cross (Jn 20:27).
    - 2. When John is granted a vision into the heavenly throne room, he sees Christ as a slaughtered lamb still being praised for His redemptive death (Rev 5:5-12).
    - 3. Even after His ascension and session, He remains a humble King who intercedes on behalf of His people (Rom 8:34), graciously gives the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:33), and will ultimately hand the kingdom over to the Father (1 Cor 15:24).
- c. THE OVERLAP OF HUMILIATION AND EXALTATION IN CHRIST
  - i. Based on this evidence, any strictly successive interpretation of the two states – humiliation, then exaltation – must be rejected.
  - ii. The simultaneous humiliation and exaltation of Christ is not a contradiction because Christ always humbles Himself (Php 2:8; cf Lk 14:11), and is exalted by the Father (Php 2:9; cf Acts 2:33).
  - iii. Calvin adds that Christ is able to retain His exalted status because He takes on the form of a servant voluntarily.
- d. THE MAJESTIC GLORY OF THE CROSS
  - i. While in the Roman world, the cross was an instrument of shame and humiliation, Jesus declared it to be His glorious exaltation.
    - 1. The hour of suffering and glory is on the mind of Jesus from the beginning of His ministry (Jn 2:4).
    - 2. It is used by John to focus the mission of Jesus to Golgotha (Jn 7:30; 8:20; 13:1).
    - 3. It also culminates the night before the crucifixion when Jesus prays (Jn 17:1).
    - 4. Jesus speaks of His being lifted up on three separate occasions (Jn 3:14; 8:28; 12:32).
  - ii. The cross becomes not only the center of redemptive history, but the fulcrum on which the logic of the world is turned upside down.

1. Shame is transformed into glory, humiliation is exaltation, foolishness is wisdom, and the cross is the throne from which Christ rules the world.
  - iii. Interestingly, many proponents of the successive view acknowledge John's picture of the glory and exaltation of the cross, but then simply ignore or cast it aside as a glitch in the otherwise neat categories of humiliation, then exaltation.
    1. What John states explicitly – Christ is exalted on the cross – Mark says through irony (Mk 15), and Paul through concepts of wisdom/foolishness and power/weakness (1 Cor 1:18-25).
  - iv. How could Christ be exalted in humiliation?
    1. His suffering is glorious because it accomplishes salvation.
    2. His humiliating death reveals the glorious character of God.
  - v. Exaltation in humiliation is foolishness to the human eye, but to the eye of faith it is the wisdom of God.
    1. The servant form of Christ both hides and reveals his kingship.
      - a. It veils His majesty because people look at a man dying a criminal's death and would never assume Him to be a king.
      - b. It reveals His majesty because His sovereignty can be expressed in His servitude.
    2. It is hidden to fallen eyes, yet by faith one sees the gracious majesty of God in the crucified Christ.
- 3. EXALTATION THROUGH HUMILIATION: MAINTAINING THE BROADER PROGRESSION**
- a. Exaltation in humiliation does not rule out a broader movement from humiliation to exaltation. Such a progression is irrefutable in light of Scripture (1 Pet 1:11; Heb 2:10).
    - i. The doctrine of the two states of Christ is properly interpreted as exaltation in humiliation within the broader framework of exaltation through humiliation.
  - b. REVELATION OF PREVIOUS GLORY
    - i. For Calvin, the resurrection is the revelation of Christ's previously held glory and His newly acquired human glory.
    - ii. In other words, not only is the kingship of Christ revealed, but the kingdom of Christ is inaugurated.
  - c. EXALTED AS A HUMAN "FOR US"
    - i. This point stands in contrast to the later Reformed view that Christ's exaltation is primarily His reward for humiliation.
      1. Calvin asks, "What need was there for God's only Son to come down in order to acquire something new for Himself?"

- ii. Is this an irreconcilable difference? Is Christ's exaltation either for Himself or for us?
1. Although Scripture certainly implies that humiliation is the cause of exaltation, or exaltation the reward of humiliation (Isa 53:10-12; Mt 23:12; Php 2:9; Heb 2:10), the ultimate aim of Christ's exaltation is for us.
  2. The exaltation that Christ acquired in Himself was not because He needed to be exalted, but because we needed to be exalted. He acquired glory for Himself as a king so that it could be given for us in His kingdom.
  3. "Christ enters into the human cycle of descent and ascent, and where humanity has fallen short of its destiny of ascent to God, Christ has fulfilled it as a Second Adam and leads humanity upward toward their original purpose of viceregency with God over the earth." – Douglas Farrow
  4. Jesus was not exalted because He was in need of glory or royal status, but so that He might pour out the Holy Spirit for the building up of His church (Acts 2:33-36; Eph 4:8-12).

## LESSON 6: SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY – CHRIST: THE KING ON THE CROSS, PART 3

---

### 1. THE THREEFOLD OFFICE OF CHRIST (*MUNUS TRIPLEX*): PROPHET, PRIEST, AND KING

- a. CALVIN ON THE *MUNUS TRIPLEX* AND THE KINGSHIP OF CHRIST ON THE CROSS
  - i. Calvin's use of the *munus triplex* includes two key features:
    1. Calvin used it as an instrument to uphold the unity and wholeness of Christ's work, cautioning that "they who separate one office from the other, rend Christ asunder, and subvert their own faith."
    2. For Calvin, the office of king consists of two primary roles: victory over Satan, sin, and death, and governing and ruling over the spiritual kingdom.
      - a. The key to the first role is that Christ is already king while on the cross. Calvin avoids the tendency of later Protestant theology which confined the kingly office to the state of exaltation.
      - b. In addition to the priestly and prophetic aspects of Christ's death, Calvin understands the cross as a royal conquest by which Christ the king triumphs over Satan, sin, and death.
  - ii. NINETEENTH-CENTURY LIBERAL THEOLOGY
    - i. The first major trend of this movement is that liberals did not relate the kingship of Christ to Christ's death on the cross.
      1. This is a far cry from Calvin's view of the cross as a "triumphal chariot," or as the early church referred to it, "the trophy of the cross." The death of Christ was almost exclusively relegated to the priesthood of Christ and often stripped of themes, such as God's holiness and wrath.
    - ii. The second major trend of this movement is that Christ's kingship was understood in almost completely subjective terms.
      1. In an attempt to please Enlightenment thinking, there was little room for a supernatural king ruling from heaven, so the focus was placed on the community of the king and its ethics.
      2. With modernity's elevation of reason and science, no attention was given to the biblical theme of Christ's victory over Satan and demons on the cross (Col 2:14-15).
      3. As a result, the emphasis was not on Christ reigning; it was on His teaching about a moral, communal kingdom. In other words, while these liberals claimed the kingship of Christ as primary, they actually

present Christ as a prophet whose primary work is teaching about the morals of the kingdom.

c. NINETEENTH-CENTURY REFORMED THEOLOGY

- i. In response, some Reformers focused almost exclusively on the priestly office of Christ and downplaying the royal and prophetic offices.
  1. It was a reaction to the liberal tendency of ignoring the harsh themes of the cross (wrath, penalty, justice, propitiation, etc) by making them dominate the entirety of Christ's work.
- ii. Other Reformers organized the three offices chronologically according to Christ's life, death, and ascension.
  1. Not only does this order relegate the death of Christ to the office of priest, it further redefines the relation between the priesthood and the kingship of Christ.
  2. By defining kingship as the application of what Christ accomplished on the cross, it is implied that Christ's kingship did not accomplish anything itself.

d. CONCLUSION

- i. We would do well to return to the roots of these doctrines in seeking to integrate rather than divide the aspects of Christ's work.
- ii. The firm lines drawn between these aspects of Christ's work have made it difficult to understand how the kingdom and the cross relate in Christ's ministry and mission.
- iii. The cross is neither the failure of Jesus' messianic ministry nor simply the prelude to His royal glory, but the apex of His kingdom mission – the throne from which He rules and establishes His kingdom.

## LESSON 7: SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY – ATONEMENT: EXPANSIVE PARTICULARITY

---

### 1. CHRISTUS VICTOR OR PENAL SUBSTITUTION?

#### a. DEFINITIONS

- i. Christus Victor: “Christ fights against and triumphs over the evil powers of the world, the ‘tyrants’ under which mankind is in bondage and suffering, and in Him God reconciles the world to Himself.” – Gustaf Aulen
- ii. Penal Substitution: “Jesus Christ, our Lord, moved by a love that was determined to do everything necessary to save us, endured and exhausted the destructive divine judgment for which we were otherwise inescapably destined, and so won us forgiveness, adoption, and glory.” – J. I. Packer
- iii. Some notes on penal substitution:
  1. It must be understood within the broader spectrum of Christ’s multifaceted accomplishment on the cross. Not only did Jesus bear the penalty of condemnation and death by taking the place of sinners on the cross, he defeated Satan, sin, and death (Col 2:15), demonstrated the love of God (Rom 5:8), and much more.
  2. It must be presented as the outcome of God’s love. Although it rightly highlights God’s wrath and Jesus’ propitiation, if it were not for God’s unfailing love, there would be no atonement (1 Jn 4:10).
  3. It must be understood within a Trinitarian framework. Though one can distinguish between the acts of Father, Son, and Spirit in the event of the cross, atonement is ultimately the work of the one God.
    - a. A Trinitarian framework safeguards against the depiction of the cross as a mere exchange between an angry Father and a loving Son (Jn 3:16; 10:18).

### 2. EXPANSIVE PARTICULARITY: AVOIDING REDUCTIONISM AND RELATIVISM

#### a. EXPANSIVE PARTICULARITY

- i. The history of Christiana theology demonstrates the difficulty of upholding the breadth of the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27) and giving special attention to the particulars that are of first importance (1 Cor 15:3).
- ii. Unfortunately, one often comes at the expense of the other, resulting in either reductionism (particularity without breadth) or relativism (breadth without particularity).
- iii. The atoning work of Christ is grand and glorious; its accomplishment is as wide-reaching as the sin to which it provides a remedy. Anything less than an expansive account of the atonement falls short of Scripture’s presentation of the glory of God in the cross of Christ.
- iv. The sum, however, is incomprehensible without its parts.

### 3. THE PROBLEM: CHRISTUS VICTOR VERSUS PENAL SUBSTITUTION

#### a. CHRISTUS VICTOR VS. PENAL SUBSTITUTION

- i. While many proponents of Christus Victor outright reject penal substitution, defenders of penal substitution often ignore Christus Victor.
- ii. Why has such a clear biblical theme been neglected in this tradition?
  1. The medieval debates between Anselm and Abelard (satisfaction vs. exemplar) greatly shaped the nature of the discussions for most of the second millennium.
  2. Although the seventeenth century saw a greater awareness in spiritual warfare, the emphasis was placed on Christians' battle with Satan rather than on Christ's victory over Satan.
  3. The victory theme was neglected because of an overreaction to the early church's faulty view of how Christ accomplished victory over the devil – namely, through deception.
- iii. Ironically, conservatives and liberals have for the most part neglected Christ's victory over Satan.
  1. Although many liberal theologians have championed Christ's victory on the cross, they have often abandoned the belief in Satan and demons as real spiritual entities.
  2. Conservatives have fought for the reality of demonic beings, yet neglected their defeat in Christ's work on the cross.

## LESSON 8: SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY – ATONEMENT: RECONCILING CHRISTUS VICTOR AND PENAL SUBSTITUTION, PART 1

---

### 1. WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

#### a. SIN AND ITS EFFECTS

- i. The complexity of sin must be recognized in its essence (rebellion, mistrust, pride, etc.) and its effects (alienation, slavery, ignorance, etc.).
- ii. The OT alone uses over fifty different Hebrew words for sin.
  1. A relationship that has been broken: relational
  2. The disturbance of shalom: social
  3. Rebellion against authority: covenantal
  4. Guilt that necessitates punishment: legal
  5. Uncleaness and pollution: ritual
  6. Shame and disgrace on oneself and/or God: emotional
  7. An accumulating burden: historical
  8. Death: final
  9. A sinful kingdom or domain of darkness: eschatological
- iii. The far-reaching effects of sin extend into every inch of the world and even shape our understanding of time.
  1. The old age – under Adam – is dominated by the law, the flesh, and death.
  2. The new age – inaugurated by Christ – is marked by grace, the Spirit, and life.
  3. This eschatological framework for sin serves as a reminder that sin is not merely existential separation from God; it is banishment from Eden, exile from the promised land, and ultimately the forsakenness Jesus experienced on the cross.
  4. Therefore, we need not only reconciliation with God, we also need a new king who will usher in a new kingdom.
- iv. Sin at its core is against God.
  1. Although theologians have long sought to define the essence of sin as rebellion, pride, or mistrust, each of these is ultimately aimed at God and is a rejection of God (Ps 51:4).

#### b. ENMITY WITH GOD AND BONDAGE TO SATAN

- i. The core problem for Christus Victor is that humans are in bondage to the powers of evil. For penal substitution, the problem is that humans have enmity with God, entailing both divine wrath and human guilt.
- ii. Both theories present aspects of the problem that are clearly taught in Scripture.

1. Humans in their fallen state are in the domain of darkness (Col 1:13) and under the power of the evil one (1 Jn 5:19; cf 2 Cor 4:4; Eph 2:2).
2. Yet, Scripture equally asserts that God's wrath remains on every unregenerate person (Rom 1:18-3:20); Eph 2:3; 5:6; Col 3:6; Rev 6:16).

## 2. WHAT IS THE PRIMARY PROBLEM?

- a. Satan certainly had an influence, however, it was Adam who brought sin to humanity.
  - i. Satan tempted Adam before the fall, but it was not until Adam sinned that Satan gained dominion over Adam (and his progeny).
  - ii. Only because Adam rejected God as king did Satan become his ruler.
  - iii. Adam, who had been created in the image of God to rule over every beast of the earth (Gen 1:26, 28) had failed at his task and was now ruled by the craftiest of all of the beasts (Gen 3:1).
- b. Bondage to Satan is a result of rebelling against God and the enmity that follows. The prefall rebellion of Satan does, however, show that human sin and Satan's influence are deeply intertwined.

## 3. THE COMMUNITY AND THE COSMOS

- a. God has cosmic purposes in creation (Ps 148; Col 1:15-20); yet, there is also a priority given to humanity as the special focus of God's work.
- b. In Gen 1-2, only humans are made in the image of God, and their creation is the apex of all God's creation, bringing forth the unprecedented "very good" (Gen 1:31).
- c. Rom 8:19-23 makes clear that creation being subjected to futility and in bondage to corruption is ultimately tied to the brokenness of humanity.
- d. Christ's salvation is aimed at both the church and the cosmos, but in proper order.
  - i. The church is the focus of salvation; the cosmos, the scope of salvation.

## 4. BONDAGE TO SATAN AS A RESULT OF ENMITY WITH GOD

- a. Humans are in bondage to Satan because they have rejected God as king; they are in the kingdom of Satan because they have been banished from the kingdom of God. Enmity with God is therefore the root problem.
- b. Bondage to Satan is derivative of the God-human problem, for as soon as distance comes into the relationship, a third party is then able to creep in, which is precisely what Satan did and continues to do.
- c. The most common way that Scripture speaks of sinning against God is by breaking His law (1 Jn 3:4).
  - i. "The punishments that God has ordained for sin in this life are guilt, pollution, suffering, death, and the dominion of Satan. Guilt is the first and heaviest punishment." – Herman Bavinck

## 5. WHO IS SATAN?

- a. Satan rules through his word – his tempting, deceiving, accusing word – which leads to death.
  - i. The idea of ruling by speaking is actually basic to nearly every concept of kingship: a king speaks and his will is done.
- b. The Bible portrays God's reign in such a way.
  - i. Gen 1-2 depicts God as a king who reigns through His word (cf Ps 93). He speaks and creation comes into existence.
- c. When speaking of Satan's "power," one must acknowledge that only Yahweh is omnipotent (Isa 40:25-26), which therefore makes an absolute dualism impossible.
  - i. Satan's power is exercised under the sovereignty of God and is used for His purposes.
- d. THE TEMPTER (MT 4:3; 1 THESS 3:5)
  - i. It is this tactic that perhaps most broadly defines his activity. Satan seeks to entice, allure, and persuade humans to sin against God.
    1. "Satan's ability to prevent or sever a relationship with God comes through his power to incite sin and transgression." – Clinton Arnold
  - ii. This point significantly reveals the limits to Satan's power, for he cannot force humans to sin.
    1. "...temptation is suggestion. It requires, in order to succeed, to find what it cannot create: the formally free consent of the human person." – Henri Blocher
  - iii. It is sin that is ultimately destructive in this world (Rom 6:23), so Satan schemes in order to draw humans into self-destructive decisions. Since he cannot force people to sin, he tempts them by making sin seem attractive.
- e. THE DECEIVER (JN 8:44; 2 COR 4:4; 11:14; REV 12:9)
  - i. Deception has been his tactic since the beginning.
  - ii. When Satan seeks to attack the church, he does so by inspiring deviant teaching (1 Tim 4:1), requiring churches to test the spirits (1 Jn 4:1; cf 2:18-27).
- f. THE ACCUSER
  - i. As Rev 12:9-11 reveals, the war that Satan wages against Christ and His people is essentially a legal battle (see also Job 1; Zech 3:1-5)
  - ii. The surprising feature of this aspect of Satan's power is that he is right in his accusation, appealing to the holy standard of God's justice.
    1. His weapon is the law; for as soon as it is broken, he is ready to accuse the guilty and call for the proper sanctions according to God's justice.
    2. "The devil's accusation is based on the correct presupposition that the penalty of sin necessitates a judgment of spiritual death and not salvific reward." – G. K. Beale

- iii. Although Satan appeals to God's righteous standard, he is far from a righteous accuser (Jn 10:10). His name itself is a reminder that he is not only an accuser but a slanderer.

g. THE DEATH-BRINGER (HEB 2:14)

- i. Satan's power of death must be understood properly.
  - 1. Only God has the ultimate power over life and death (1 Sam 2:6).
  - 2. Satan's power of death is a power that works through inciting the fear of death, and is exercised by subjecting sinners to slavery through fear of their sins' consequences.
- ii. Sin and death are inextricably linked.
  - 1. Death came into the world through sin (Rom 5:12; cf 6:16, 23; 7:11, 13).
  - 2. Sin results in death because God's judgment follows human sin and brings about condemnation (Rom 5:16).
  - 3. Death is a penalty from God Himself and comes about as a consequence of enmity with God (1 Cor 15).
  - 4. One does not defeat death simply by defeating death. Death must be defeated by overcoming sin.

## LESSON 9: SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY – ATONEMENT: RECONCILING CHRISTUS VICTOR AND PENAL SUBSTITUTION, PART 2

---

### 1. HOW DOES CHRIST CONQUER SATAN?

#### a. A FITTING REMEDY: CHRISTUS VICTOR THROUGH PENAL SUBSTITUTION

- i. If the God-human problem is the root of the Satan-human problem, then resolving the former must be the means of dealing with the latter.
- ii. Christ defeats Satan (Christus Victor) by removing the ground of Satan's accusation, which Jesus does by paying the penalty for sin (penal substitution). God's justice has been upheld and sinners have been forgiven: He is both just and the justifier (Rom 3:26).
- iii. Christus Victor apart from penal substitution, therefore, does not explain why Christ had to suffer in order to conquer Satan and actually undermines the victory.

#### b. HEB 2:5-18

- i. What is it about Christ's death that could make it the cause of victory?
  1. Death in the broader context of Hebrews is Christ's sacrificial, once-for-all, sin-bearing death (Heb 9:26-28; cf 2:17; 9:14).
  2. Based on the context of 2:14, we can say that it is the sacrificial and propitiatory death of Jesus that defeats the devil.
- ii. How does this interpretation shed light on the way in which the devil is defeated?
  1. Christ's sacrificial death purifies the sinner's conscience (Heb 9:14) so that we now have confidence to enter the holy places (Heb 10:19).
  2. This boldness before God that flows from forgiveness of sin is the antithesis of the fear of death, which the devil wields as his weapon (Heb 2:15).
  3. The word for destroy (*katargēsē*) in 2:14 also includes the meaning of depriving something of its power (Rom 3:31; Eph 2:15).
  4. Christ destroys the devil by depriving him of his power through His sacrificial death, thereby reconciling sinners and restoring His design for the world.

#### c. COL 2:13-15

- i. 2:15 is the foundational text for almost every understanding of Christ's victory over evil.
- ii. How does Christ disarm and therefore triumph over the powers?
  1. Col 2:13-14: Christ's military triumph over the powers (victory) is through His debt-cancelling, trespass-forgiving, legal-demand-satisfying death on the cross (forensic).

d. REV 12:9-11

- i. Although the final outcome is presented in military language, the entire conflict is depicted essentially as a legal battle, a courtroom drama climaxing in the removal of Satan's authority to rightfully accuse.
  1. Satan is the legal prosecutor (12:10) who seeks to condemn the guilty for breaking the law.
  2. His accusatory power is undone because Christ has freed Christians from their sins (Rev 1:5-6), thereby removing the basis of Satan's accusations.
- ii. Referring to Christ's death as by the blood of the Lamb is to employ the language of sacrificial, substitutionary atonement.

e. 1 JN 3:4-9

- i. 3:8 reveals that victory does not exclude substitutionary atonement but depends on it.
- ii. Sin in this context is rebellion against God and siding with the devil. Thus the destruction of the devil's work should be understood in terms of taking away sins.
- iii. 3:8 does not simply say that Christ came to destroy the devil but rather to destroy the works of the devil.

f. SUMMARY: CHRISTUS VICTOR THROUGH PENAL SUBSTITUTION

- i. Penal substitution and Christus Victor are doing different things in the explanation of the cross.
  1. Penal substitution explains the means of victory, or how Christ's suffering disarms Satan, and is usually depicted in forensic terms.
  2. Christus Victor explains the effect of Christ's accomplishment on Satan and his dominion over sinners.
  3. These two aspects of the atonement need not compete, for they are explanations of different (yet inseparable) aspects of Christ's work.
- ii. Christ's victory was achieved in accordance with God's standard of justice.
  1. The OT speaks regularly of God's throne being established in righteousness and His victories won in justice (Ps 97:2).
  2. In the NT, Jesus speaks of Satan's defeat as judgment (Jn 12:31; 16:11).
  3. God is praised specifically for the way in which justice is upheld in victory (Rev 19:1-2).

**2. COUNTERATTACK: THE WORKS OF SATAN AND THE WAYS OF JESUS**

a. SATAN THE TEMPTER – JESUS THE OBEDIENT ONE

- i. From the wilderness (Mt 4:1-11) to Gethsemane (26:36-46) and ultimately on the cross (Mt 27:40), Jesus resisted the temptation of the devil and chose obedience to the Father. The obedience of Christ, as a counterattack to

Satan's temptation, is incredibly important for understanding Christ's atoning work.

- ii. The well-known distinction between Christ's active and passive obedience is helpful, but must be appropriated carefully.
  1. Christ was active in everything He did, including His suffering, and yet He was also always submissive to the Father's will.
  2. The proper use of the active/passive distinction is in this manner: Through Christ's obedience He fulfills the law (active) and pays the penalty for the law being broken (passive).
- iii. Obedience holds Christ's life and death together in His work of atonement (Rom 5:19), thereby avoiding the mistake of locating atonement solely in the cross.

b. SATAN THE DECEIVER – JESUS THE TRUE AND FAITHFUL WITNESS

- i. While Satan is the deceiver who has blinded the minds of the unbelievers (2 Cor 4:4), Jesus is the truth who gives light to everyone (Jn 1:9; 14:6).
- ii. Jesus overcomes the deceiver through truth, exposing his testimony as false, his assertions as lies, and his promises as empty.

c. SATAN THE ACCUSER – JESUS THE PROPITIATOR

- i. Christ's removal of Satan's accusatory power is the most deadly blow delivered to Satan and is the central thrust of penal substitution's explanatory power regarding Christ's victory.
- ii. As a courtroom prosecutor, Satan zealously declares, "Guilty!" and calls for the proper penalty for sin – death.
  1. This scheme of Satan's is the strongest because its power is derived from the fact that it appeals to God's holy standard: the law.
  2. Sinners are guilty before the holy Judge and fully deserve the sentence of God's wrath and death.
- iii. As Satan spouts his accusatory words – wielding the weapon of the law – they are rendered ineffective on Jesus, who is without sin and fulfills the law in every aspect of His life.
  1. In a shocking move, the sinless, law-keeping, covenant-fulfilling Messiah voluntarily takes on Himself the sins of the world, bearing the curse of the law – namely, God's wrath, and ultimately, death.
- iv. As the propitiation for sins (Rom 3:25), Jesus bears the wrath of God in the place of sinners, thereby satisfying God's justice and expiating the sin of God's people.
  1. Satan's accusatory word is silenced, for his weapon of the law has been rendered ineffective by Christ's covenant-keeping life and curse-bearing death.

2. “The death and resurrection of Christ have banished the devil from this privilege formerly granted him by God, because...the devil no longer had any basis for his accusations against the saints, since the penalty that they deserved and that he pleaded for had at last been exacted in Christ’s death.” – G. K. Beale
- d. SATAN THE DEATH-BRINGER – JESUS THE LIFE-GIVER
- i. Although death is ultimately a result of God’s judgment on sin (Rom 6:23), Satan has an instrumental role in leading the sinner down this path.
  - ii. Sin is the ground of Satan’s dominion, and by atoning for sin, Jesus undoes Satan’s authority to reign. Jesus reverses the decay of death by undoing the effects of sin (1 Cor 15:55).
  - iii. Christ conquered death through death (Heb 2:14), and where the reign of death is defeated, the reign of grace prevails, which results in life (Rom 5:21).
- e. THE WEAPONRY OF THE BATTLE (EPH 6:10-20)
- i. Although this passage is addressing Christians’ role in resisting the devil, it can be applied to Christ as the head of the body and the commander of God’s army. In other words, this passage can offer a perspective on how Christ and Christians wage war on, and ultimately defeat, Satan.
    1. This battle is not against flesh and blood (6:12). The outcome, therefore, is not to be determined by which side has the greatest strength or power. If it were, there would be no real battle since God is omnipotent.
    2. This war is advanced on the spiritual battlefield of sin and salvation, bondage and liberation.
    3. The weaponry of this battle is not the strength of arms or valor of swords but truth, righteousness, the gospel of peace, faith, salvation, the word of God, prayer, and perseverance (6:14-18).
    4. These are the weapons with which Christ defeated the devil and has invited His followers to use as they continue to stand (6:11).
  - ii. Victorious Humanity
    1. Many Reformers have attributed Christ’s victory almost completely to His divinity; according to Horton, “there has been a widespread tendency throughout church history to treat the victory of Christ almost exclusively as the victory of God.”
    2. Scripture, however, is clear that Christ’s humanity is essential to both His sacrificial and victorious work (Rom 5:12-21; 1 Tim 2:5; Heb 2:14, 17).

3. Christ had to be fully human in order to save us because He had to fulfill the covenant as our representative, make an offering of atonement on our behalf, and bear the penalty in our place.
4. A proper understanding of the humanity of Christ makes room for the place of the Holy Spirit in the work of Christ. Jesus is, after all, the Messiah – the Spirit-anointed Son of David who as a human mediates God’s royal power to all the earth.

iii. The Victory of Christ and Christians

1. Although Christ’s work on the cross is a finished work, it still needs to be appropriated and consummated. Christians do not contribute to Christ’s atoning, victorious work, but they are taken up into it (Rom 16:20; 1 Jn 2:13-14; Rev 12:11).
2. Christians conquer Satan through their witness to Christ’s victorious achievement on the cross. A Christian witness to the truth of Christ’s victory, therefore, exposes Satan’s lies as false and heralds his inevitable demise.
3. Christians take part in Christ’s victory by sharing in His victorious suffering. It should be no surprise that a kingdom established by suffering would be advanced through similar means (1 Pet 5:6-11).

## LESSON 10: SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY – ATONEMENT: RECONCILING CHRISTUS VICTOR AND PENAL SUBSTITUTION, PART 3

---

### 1. WHEN DOES CHRIST'S VICTORY DECISIVELY HAPPEN?

#### a. THE CENTRALITY OF THE CROSS IN THE ATONEMENT

- i. While Christ's incarnation, life, resurrection, and ascension are all vastly important, Scripture presents Christ's death on the cross as the high point of His atoning work.
  1. By declaring, "It is finished" just before His death, Jesus Himself revealed the definitive nature of His crucifixion (Jn 19:30).
  2. When the NT authors sought to explain Christ's setting right what sin had made wrong, they regularly recalled Christ's cross or blood, both representing His death (Rom 5:10; 1 Cor 15:3; Eph 2:16; 1 Pet 1:19).
  3. Paul could summarize his entire message under the simple, yet powerful phrase, "Christ crucified" (1 Cor 1:23; 2:2).
  4. The fact that the OT sacrificial system and especially Isa 52:13-53:12 provide the primary background for understanding Christ's atoning work surely suggests an emphasis on the death of Christ as the slain Lamb and Suffering Servant.
- ii. To call the cross central does not mean that it is the only moment of the atonement but the most definitive. The cross must be central but never solo.
  1. We need an expansive view that encompasses all of Christ's work, but in a way that still upholds the particular significance of each aspect through integration, order, and rank.
- iii. How then, does each aspect relate to the cross?
  1. Christ's incarnation and hypostatic union are foundational for the doctrine of atonement, for as the early church recognized, Jesus had to be fully God and fully human to be the Mediator and Savior.
  2. Christ's life and ministry are essential to His atoning work. He not only paid the penalty for our breaking the law, but He kept the covenant and fulfilled the law in our place as well.
  3. Christ's preaching, healings, exorcisms, and miracles clarify that Christ's intentional journey to the cross was not an end in and of itself but the means by which He would accomplish His greater goal of reconciling sinners, defeating evil, and establishing God's kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.
  4. The ascension of Christ is also important for His atoning work. The atoning value of Christ's offering in the heavenly sanctuary shows the breadth of Christ's atoning work (Heb 9:11-14). It is the resurrected

and ascended Christ who sends His Spirit to continue His work on the earth.

5. Christ's second coming is also included because it is the consummation of His atoning-victorious work on the cross, not a further step beyond it.
- iv. Relating Christ's death to His resurrection is of particular importance, for these two are often paired together, and as such are said to be of first importance (Mk 8:31; Rom 6:5; 1 Cor 15:3-4).
  1. The cross and the resurrection are doing different things, and it is more appropriate to speak of the cross as the center of atonement (Heb 9:22).
  2. Propitiation, redemption, conquering Satan, and the other events form the language of the doctrine of the atonement, and all of these are accomplished primarily on the cross.
  3. The centrality of the cross in the doctrine of atonement does not take away from the resurrection but rather seeks to locate its significance in the right place (1 Cor 15:3, 20).
- v. What then, of the resurrection? The typical Reformed answer has been that the resurrection is the vindication of Christ. The resurrection reveals that Jesus is who He said He was and accomplished what He said He would.
  1. If Jesus has not been raised from the dead, the salvation that He achieved cannot be applied to those in need (1 Cor 15:17).
  2. Christ's resurrection is the beginning of the new creation (1 Cor 15:35-49; Eph 1:15-23; Col 1:15-20; Rev 3:14).

## 2. WHY DOES CHRIST CONQUER SATAN?

- a. Christ does not defeat Satan for the sake of defeating Satan. His accomplishment of victory serves an even greater aim: reconciliation.
- b. The goal of reconciliation with God helps resolve Christ's propitiatory and victorious work, for both remove barriers in service of the greater aim of a reconciled people in a renewed kingdom.
- c. Reconciliation, however, proves to be second-to-last, for the ultimate aim of God's atoning work is the glory of God.
  - i. This is precisely the testimony of Scripture (Eph 1:6; cf Ex 14:4, 18; Ps 79:9; Isa 43:25; 48:9-11; Rom 3:24-25; 1 Jn 2:12).
  - ii. Christ's sacrifice is not only atonement for sin but an offering of praise to God, which then enables others to join in their created purpose of worshipping God.

## 3. CONCLUSION

- a. The connection between Christus Victor and the kingdom of God is this: divine victory is ultimately royal victory and aimed at God's kingdom.

- b. On the cross, Jesus bears the penalty of sin by taking the place of sinners, thereby defeating Satan and establishing God's kingdom on earth.
- c. There are at least three reasons why penal substitution must be attached to Christus Victor:
  - i. If our sins have not been dealt with, the coming of God's kingdom is not good news. We remain under God's wrath and outside His kingdom. Even with Satan defeated and shackles broken, only those whose penalty has been paid can enter the kingdom of God as citizens.
  - ii. Penal substitution is crucial to the story line of Scripture culminating in the kingdom of God. The concepts of sin and the wrath of God are woven throughout the unfolding story of Israel, culminating in the song of the Suffering Servant (Isa 52:13-53:12).
  - iii. Penal substitution is imperative for upholding the justice of the coming of God's kingdom. The coming of the kingdom, including the defeat of evil and the salvation of His people, must be in accordance with God's just character.

# LESSON 11: SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY – KINGDOM: THE CRUCIFORM REIGN OF GOD, PART 1

---

## 1. THE CRUCIFORM KINGDOM OF GOD

- a. Christ's atoning death on the cross creates a community of ransomed people living under the reign of God (Rev 1:6).
- b. God's kingdom is a cruciform kingdom, and just as it was established and inaugurated by Christ's death and resurrection, it will be advanced by God's reign over and through those whom the Spirit unites to Christ in His death and resurrection.
- c. THE CRUCIFORM NATURE OF THE KINGDOM
  - i. There are five primary ways that the theology of the cross applies to the kingdom of God.
    1. The theology of the cross reveals the great continuity between the means of establishing and advancing God's kingdom on earth (1 Cor 1:18-31).
      - a. This continuity between Christ and Christians is not based solely on the imitation of Christ, but on union with Christ.
      - b. The crucified-resurrected Christ advances His kingdom through those whom the Spirit unites to Christ in His death and resurrection.
    2. The theology of the cross clarifies the hidden nature of the kingdom of God during this present age.
      - a. *abscondita sub contrario* – "hidden under the opposite"
      - b. Between Christ's resurrection and return, the kingdom of God is hidden beneath the cross.
    3. God's kingdom will not be hidden by the cross forever, a statement that requires a distinction between the kingdom in this present age, where God's rule is hidden, and the age to come, where it is unveiled.
      - a. The Reformers referred to this distinction as the kingdom of grace (*regnum gratiae*) and the kingdom of glory (*regnum gloriae*).
      - b. The kingdom is forever cruciform in the sense that the cross ever remains the basis of the kingdom and will always shape its existence.
      - c. In this age, however, the kingdom is cruciform particularly in the sense that it is advanced by taking up the cross, and hidden to fallen eyes beneath the weakness and foolishness of the cross.
    4. Although the royal power of God is hidden under the cross, it is recognized by faith for those who have eyes to see.

- a. The emphasis on divine revelation is inseparable from human faith.
  - b. The cross is revealed by God and received by people in faith to be the wisdom and power of God.
5. The theology of the cross reveals that the coming of the kingdom does not render the cross obsolete.
- a. Certainly Christ's sacrificial death is once for all and need not be repeated (Heb 9:26), but it forever remains the founding act and shaping factor for the kingdom and therefore reaches into eternity.

## LESSON 12: SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY – KINGDOM: THE CRUCIFORM REIGN OF GOD, PART 2

---

### 1. THE COMPASSIONATE AND JUST KING

- a. God is king (Ex 15:18; Num 23:21; Deut 33:5, 26; Jdg 8:23; 1 Sam 8:7; 10:19; 12:12; Ps 93:1; 96:10; 97:1; 99:1), but what kind of king is He?
- b. THE COMPASSIONATE KING
  - i. What kind of king is God? He is a good, righteous, gracious, merciful, and loving king (Ps 145). God's kingship must be understood in light of all of His attributes.
    1. The first act of God as the Creator-king is to bless His image-bearers (Gen 1:28). It was the lie of the serpent to portray God's reign as oppressive and tyrannical.
    2. God's kingship is revealed in the context of His covenant with Abraham and his descendants. Because God is a covenant-king who has bound Himself to His people, He is not a disinterested despot capitalizing on His servants but a caring king who seeks the welfare of His people.
  - ii. Perhaps the greatest image the OT uses to capture the benevolent nature of God's kingship is that of a shepherd (Ezek 34).
    1. The idea of God as a shepherd-king draws from the relationship between divine and human kingship. This is important, for if the question is what kind of king is God, one place to look is in those who bear the image of such kingship.
    2. If humanity is to reflect God's kingship on earth (Gen 1:26-28), then the way in which they are told to reign should also reveal something about the way in which God reigns.
    3. A good king does not simply rule and serve, but rules by serving (cf Deut 17:14-20).
  - iii. In the NT, the benevolent kingship of God is seen through the gospel of Jesus Christ.
    1. On the way to Jerusalem, Jesus redefines kingship to James and John in terms of service and giving (Mk 10:32-45).
    2. In the upper room, Jesus washes His disciples' feet and declares that they identify Him rightly as Lord (Jn 13:13).
- c. THE JUST KING
  - i. Kingship by definition entails authority, and God can assert His righteous authority to save or to judge (Ps 89).
    1. While God's royal power can assume the form of weakness, it is by no means limited to it (Dan 4:37; cf Rev 15:3).

- ii. The just nature of God's kingship can be seen in His exercise of power (Rom 1:4, 20; Rom 15:19; 1 Cor 2:4; 6:14; 12:10, 28-29; 2 Cor 12:12; Gal 3:5; 1 Thess 1:5).
- iii. The just nature of God's kingship is also evident in His judgment of sin, for as a holy king who is committed to protecting the purity of His kingdom, God will by no means clear the guilty (Nah 1:3).
- iv. The just nature of God's kingship is demonstrated in His victory over evil. God must dethrone and destroy the very enemies that seek to prevent His reign of peace (Ex 15:7, 18).
- v. The just nature of God's kingship is not relaxed when Jesus comes to bring the kingdom as the Suffering Servant (Isa 42:1; cf 9:7; Jer 23:5). And while Jesus displayed the kingdom through healing and forgiving, He also maintained that there is no place in God's kingdom for those opposed to the king (Mt 7:21).

d. THE TRINITARIAN KINGSHIP OF GOD

- i. The cruciform kingdom of the triune God breaks into history when the Father sends the Son in the power of the Spirit.
- ii. In between the already and the not yet, God advances His kingdom by the Spirit, who applies the finished work of the Son in order that the kingdom may ultimately be handed over to the Father.

2. FOLLOWING THE KING BY TAKING UP THE CROSS

- a. Since God reigns over and through His people, what can be said about the role of Christians in the advancement of the kingdom between the already and the not yet? God advances His kingdom through the church as it conforms to the cross.
  - i. The kingdom is not built or advanced by people but is received (Heb 12:28).
    - 1. Contrary to social gospel theology, the kingdom of God is not the culmination of human potential and effort, but the intervention of God's sovereign grace into a sinful and broken world.
  - ii. God advances His kingdom primarily through the church – local congregations of God's reconciled servant-kings.
    - 1. Although the refrain of the kingdom is "The LORD reigns!" (Ps 96:10), the restoration of human viceregency is an essential harmony in the Bible's royal song.
    - 2. The church is not the kingdom. The church is the people of the king between the already and the not yet of the kingdom.
    - 3. The church and the kingdom, however, are inseparable. The church is a sign of the kingdom, a display to this present evil age of the anticipated reality of God's reign in the age to come.
  - iii. God advances the kingdom through Christians in the same way He established the kingdom through Christ.

1. Jesus' initial "follow me" (Mk 1:17), given as an invitation to the kingdom, is later qualified with a warning (Mk 8:34).
- iv. Such power to suffer for the gospel and take up the cross must ultimately be the power of the Spirit of God (Rom 15:19).
  1. The power of the Spirit is a power for Christlike service.
  2. The Holy Spirit is the mediating link between the presence of the kingdom in Christ and its advancement through Christians.
- v. If the kingdom is advanced by the cross, it is certainly an empty cross.
  1. The crucified king is alive, so the kingdom advances not simply by looking back to the cross but by moving forward with the crucified-resurrected king (Php 3:10).
  2. The power of the resurrection conforms individuals and the church as a whole to the cross.
- vi. Followers of Jesus are bound for glory. But what is true for Christ is true for those who are "in Christ": glory comes through suffering.
  1. This does not make suffering easy, but it does make it meaningful (Rom 8:17; 2 Cor 12:9).
  2. God is with us in our suffering, He transforms us through our suffering, and one day He will put an end to our suffering. And this is true not only for God's people, but also for God's creation (Rom 8:21).
  3. For Christ, Christians, and all of creation, the way of glory is the way of the cross.