

Caribbean Graduate School of Theology
Biblical Theology
Lecture 13 – Eternal Life in the Gospel and Epistles of John

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Eternal Life in the Gospel and Epistles of John (Schreiner 2013, 537-539).

Kingdom of God in the Synoptics vs Eternal Life in the Gospel of John:

Schreiner (2013, 537-538) notes,

John, of course, stands out as distinctive. He emphasizes the life that is granted to believers instead of emphasizing the kingdom. Jesus, according to John has been raised from the dead, and so eternal life, the life of the age to come, has invaded the present age. John emphasizes realized eschatology those who believe in Jesus already enjoy the life of the age to come. But we must beware of overstating our point. We saw above that there is a future eschatology in John. He recognizes that there is an already and a not yet. Furthermore, we saw in the Synoptics that life and the kingdom are two different ways of expressing the same reality. Those who live in the kingdom, and those who are in the kingdom enjoy life. John points to the same reality, for in chapter 3 of his gospel, where John speaks of the kingdom, Nicodemus is told that he must be born again to enter the kingdom, clearly showing that life is given to those in the kingdom. The Synoptics argue along the same lines, for the rich ruler will enter the kingdom, will have eternal life, only if he becomes a disciple of Jesus (Matt. 19:16-30 pars.).

Schreiner (2013, 538) indicates,

Just as the kingdom is an “already but not yet” reality in the Synoptics and Acts, so too eternal life fits with the “already but not yet” schema in John. John, along with Matthew, Mark, and Luke, believes that the age to come has arrived but is not consummated. John emphasized life to describe the nature of what God grants to believers. He gives them life in Christ.

Christology and Eternal Life in the Epistles of John:

- John 17:3
- John 1:1; 18
- John 14:9
- 1 John 3:2

Christology is key to John. “Christology in John is tied to soteriology” (p. 538). This is seen in the “I Am” Sayings (p. 539):

The Seven “I Am” Sayings of Jesus in John’s Gospel

1. “I am the bread of life” – John 6:35, 41
2. “I am the light of the world” – John 8:12, 9:5
3. “I am the door of the sheep” – John 10:7, 9
4. “I am the good shepherd” – John 10:11, 14
5. “I am the resurrection and the life” – John 11:25
6. “I am the way, the truth and the life” – John 14:6
7. “I am the true vine” – John 15:1, 5

Jesus is the “Son of Man” that must be lifted up and glorified (p. 539)

- John 3:14-16; John 12:27-50; cf. Dan. 7:9-14

Schreiner (2013, 539) notes,

John especially overlaps with Luke in emphasizing that life comes from the Holy Spirit. The life of the age to come is a miracle, John teaches, a gift of God’s sovereign and unpredictable grace. John does not say that God is a king when he describes God’s sovereignty, but again the concept of God’s rule is surely present in the emphasis on his sovereignty in salvation and the events of Jesus’ passion. John also stresses that the Spirit bears witness to Jesus, that he glorifies and honors Jesus, and shines the light on Jesus that human beings will believe in him. The Spirit grants assurance to believers that Jesus is really the Christ, and that they belong to the people of God.