**The Reign of the Servant Kings
By Joseph C. Dillow**A Review-Summary-Outline

(Pat's Note: Overall I'm in agreement with this commentary, but with exceptions as noted within commentary.)

**Foreword**

The Arminians, in their exegetical approach to certain problem passages, viewed the loss of a believer’s salvation as a real possibility for those who fail in a consistent walk with Jesus Christ. On the other hand, the Calvinist with a consistent biblical theology maintained that believers in Jesus Christ could never lose their eternal salvation. It may very well be that in both systems, Calvinism and Arminianism, there has been a reductionistic error committed in understanding the meaning of salvation—by emphasizing one aspect of salvation at the expense of another.

The concept and meaning of salvation in the Scriptures is multi-dimensional. There is a past aspect—justification, deliverance from the penalty of sin, and a present aspect—sanctification, deliverance from the power of sin, and a future aspect—glorification, deliverance from the presence of sin. Although a believer can never lose his justification salvation, there are dimensions of glorification salvation that may be lost or gained if we take seriously passages such as [Romans 14:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+14.10&t=NKJV), [1 Corinthians 3:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+3.15&t=NKJV), [2 Corinthians 5:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Corinthians+5.10&t=NKJV), and [2 John 1:7-8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2John+1.7-8&t=NKJV). The opportunity of reward, on the other hand, with its glories of ruling and reigning with Jesus Christ in His coming Kingdom, are presented in the Scriptures as a great motivation for holy living in the present.

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**Preface**

What do we make of a man who claims to have placed his trust in Jesus Christ but whose present life-style is a complete contradiction of the faith he once acknowledged? The Westminster divines had the ready answer that he was never a Christian to begin with, because the ultimate test of the reality of faith is perseverance in the faith. The Remonstrants, on the other hand, speaking from the Arminian tradition, viewed the matter differently. To them . . . it was also possible that he was genuinely born again but, due to his falling into sin or unbelief, lost his justification.

Is there a view of these warnings and other in the New Testament which maintains, with the Calvinist tradition that justification can never be forfeited and at the same time, allows, with the Wesleyans, that justification and sanctification are not inextricably united and that there is indeed something conditional in the believer’s ultimate destiny?

The answer to that question is yes. The danger is not loss of heaven but loss of our reward there and severe divine discipline in time. The issue of whether or not the saints will necessarily persevere and whether or not true faith is indestructible is a complex interpretive issue involving numerous passages in the New Testament, indeed one’s whole system of theology as well. An entire view of the Christian life is under consideration in the following chapters.

Throughout this book I refer to the merit which the believer can obtain by means of his good works. That God chooses to reward us according to our works, but not because of them (it is not because of a strict legal relation whereby the believer by his works places God in his debt), is an act of pure grace, not of debt. (Editor's Note: "Good [righteous] works" are works of the Holy Spirit working through us, not works of "self".)

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**Prologue**

A universal tragedy had occurred. The Morning Star, known as Lucifer ([Isaiah 14:12-17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+14.12-17&t=NKJV)), God’s perfect one, full of wisdom and beauty ([Ezekiel 28:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ezekiel+28.12&t=NKJV)), the angelic being whom God had appointed as ruler over the ancient cosmos ([Ezekiel 28:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ezekiel+28.14&t=NKJV)), . . . had fallen. The prophet Ezekiel paints a picture of divine grief in his woeful description of this betrayal ([Ezekiel 28:11-19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ezekiel+28.11-19&t=NKJV)). Lucifer had been given everything. Yet he became proud ([Ezekiel 28:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ezekiel+28.17&t=NKJV); [1 Timothy 3:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Timothy+3.6&t=NKJV)). He concluded that God’s gifts were more important than the giver, that dependence upon God and obedience to His revealed will were not necessary. He became the Satan, God’s adversary. He was cast to the earth, and the earth was judged ([Ezekiel 28:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ezekiel+28.17&t=NKJV)). At that time the earth, from which he ruled and upon which he lived ([Ezekiel 28:13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ezekiel+28.13&t=NKJV)), became without form and void ([Genesis 1:1-2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+1.1-2&t=NKJV)).

But God had a plan on how to reestablish rule over the earth, which was completely foreign to His angelic hosts and Satan himself. [Editor's Note: Satan, God's fallen son, and always ruled the earth and still does. Satan's fear is loosing that rule; consequently he does everything God allows to save his rulership.]

What is the significance of man? Man was to rule! He was the lesser creature who would be crowned with glory and honor. The glory, honor, and sovereignty which the Satan had stolen by exercising his independence and unbelief would be regained by the inferior creature living in servanthood and faith! “. . . he who is least among you all — he is the greatest” ([Luke 9:48](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+9.48&t=NKJV)).

God intends to humble the proud and independent in a unique way. He intends that the lower creature, man (created lower than the angels and hence lower than Satan), achieve the highest position (“. . . all things in subjection under his feet,” [Hebrews 2:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+2.8&t=NKJV)). “For He has not put the world to come, of which we speak, in subjection to angels” ([Hebrews 2:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+2.5&t=NKJV)). Out of the least, God will bring the greatest. It was as “man” that the Savior defeated the enemy. It was as “man” that He silenced the principalities and powers. It will be as “man” that He will reign over the future kingdom of God upon this earth.

It is a glorious reign of servant kings which extends to “all the works of His hands” ([Hebrews 2:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+2.7&t=NKJV)) -- this may suggest that one day mankind will rule the galaxies! The lion will lie down with the lamb, universal righteousness will reign, and there will be no war. Disease will be abolished, and the world of Satan will be placed under the rule of the Servant King and His companions ([Hebrews 1:9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+1.9&t=NKJV)).

Consistent with His divine purpose, God chose to establish His kingdom through the elevation of an obscure and insignificant Semitic tribe, Israel. That future glory falls to those followers of Christ both within Israel and within His Church, who, like their Master lived on earth, live in dependence and obedience.

The controlling principle of the biblical philosophy of history rests in the precept of “the second before the first.” God often chooses the “nothings” of the world to confound the “somethings” ([1 Corinthians 1:26-27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+1.26-27&t=NKJV)). Only in this way is the self praise of man destroyed. It is a pervading characteristic of the whole course of redemption that God chooses the younger before the elder, sets the smaller in priority to the greater, and chooses the second before the first (not Cain but Able and his substitute Seth; not Japheth but Shem; not Ishmael but Isaac; not Esau but Jacob; not Manasseh but Ephraim ([Genesis 48:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+48.14&t=NKJV)); not Aaron but Moses ([Exodus 7:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+7.1&t=NKJV)); not Eliab but David ([1 Samuel 16:6-13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Samuel+16.6-13&t=NKJV)); not the Old Covenant but the New ([Hebrews 8:13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+8.13&t=NKJV)); not the first Adam but the last Adam ([1 Corinthians 15:45](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+15.45&t=NKJV)). The first becomes last and the last becomes first ([Matthew 19:30](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+19.30&t=NKJV)). The great nations are set aside ([Dan 2:7ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Dan+2.7ff&t=NKJV); [Romans 1:24](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+1.24&t=NKJV), [26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+1.26&t=NKJV), [28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+1.28&t=NKJV)), and God elects to establish His purpose through two insignificant mediums, the Israel of God (the believing remnant of the last days) and the body of Christ (the invisible Church).

It is here that the beauty and symmetry of the divine plan became evident. Not only did God purpose to elevate the role of a servant and the disposition of trust, but He gave His Son, the Second Man and the Last Adam, as a savior. He who is of the essence of God became a servant ([Philippians 2:7-8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Philippians+2.7-8&t=NKJV)). And in this way, living by exactly the opposite set of principles from the Satan, He achieved higher glory ([Philippians 2:9-11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Philippians+2.9-11&t=NKJV)).

Those who would rule with Him must find their lives in the same way: “Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus” ([Philippians 2:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Philippians+2.5&t=NKJV)). The future rulers of God’s creation must, like their King, be servants now. Unlike the Satan and his modern day followers, they will have no desire to be lord over their subjects. Instead, like their Lord, they will desire only to serve those over whom they rule ([Matthew 20:25-28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+20.25-28&t=NKJV)).

Instead of disobedience there will be servanthood, to God and to others. The second Adam put it this way, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. . . . Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth” ([Matthew 5:3-5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+5.3-5&t=NKJV)).

We are to become the servant kings. That is our destiny — the glorious privilege of reigning with Messiah is the final destiny of man. In the eternal plan, only those who strive to be servants can now qualify for this great future privilege then. In order to be “great” in the kingdom of heaven, to rule there, we must first become humble like a little child ([Matthew 18:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+18.4&t=NKJV)). “The greatest among you will be your servant. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted” ([Matthew 23:11-12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+23.11-12&t=NKJV)).

If God’s eternal plan revolves around demonstrating the moral superiority of humility and servanthood, it is of the utmost importance that we learn this lesson now. All Christians are not servants, and only those who are will be great in the kingdom.

Many who have begun lives of discipleship have not persevered. They risk forfeiture of this great future. But we are “partakers (Gk. metochoi) of Christ, [only] if we hold our confidence firmly to the end” ([Hebrews 3:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+3.14&t=NKJV)). All Christians will be in the kingdom, but tragically not all will be co-heirs there. [Editor's note: All Christians, both overcomes and non-overcomers, will be in the kingdom, but in starkly different places ([Revelation 2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2&t=NKJV); [3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3&t=NKJV)).]

It is by losing our lives that we find our ultimate significance. Each act of service is not only an expression of God’s eternal purpose but it is preparation and training for our final destiny.

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