

07 “ALREADY, BUT NOT YET”

We sometimes see what appear to be contradictions in the New Testament where something is said to be present and later said to be future. These are what theologians have identified as “**already but not yet**” passages. They illustrate that the bringing in of the New Covenant Age was a process—a process that lasted approximately 40 years [AD 30 to AD 70]—i.e. a generation as Jesus prophesied. Since it is said that approximately 25% of NT writings were eschatological when written (Unger’s Bible Dictionary), we do well to discern these distinctions.

The “**already but not yet**” process is evident in most eschatological concepts of the NT: kingdom, redemption, adoption, atonement, salvation, reign of Christ, resurrection, harvest, temple, new creation, glory, defeat of Satan, perfection, justification, sanctification, judgment, etc.

It is important to understand that the New Testament books were all written before AD 67. How do we know? Because none of them show awareness of the Jewish/Roman War that radically changed the “Holy Land,” destroyed the temple, and completely reconfigured the religious landscape, putting a stop to the persecution of Christians by Jews.

The following are indicative and in no way a complete study.

1. KINGDOM of GOD

ALREADY: [God] delivered us out of the power of darkness, and translated us into the Kingdom of the Son of his love. Col 1:13

ALREADY: Even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ...and raised us up with him, and made us to sit with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Eph. 2:5-6

PROCESS: Therefore, receiving a Kingdom that can't be shaken, let us have grace, through which we serve God acceptably, with reverence and awe. Heb. 12:28

NOT YET: Even so you also, when you see these things happening, know that the Kingdom of God is near. Lk. 21:31

NOT YET: All this is evidence that God’s judgment is right and as a result you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God for which you are suffering. 2 Thes. 1:5

2. REDEMPTION

ALREADY: [God] delivered us out of the power of darkness, and translated us into the Kingdom of the Son of his love; in whom we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins. Col. 1:13-14

ALREADY: Christ] in whom we have our redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace. Eph. 1:7

ALREADY: Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Rom. 3:24

NOT YET: Don't grieve the Holy Spirit of God, in whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Eph. 4:30

NOT YET: You were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of his glory.. Eph. 1: 13-14

3. SALVATION

ALREADY: Salvation is come to the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy. Rom. 11:11

ALREADY: You rejoice greatly with joy unspeakable and full of glory— receiving the result of your faith, the salvation of your souls... 1 Peter 1:9

NOT YET: Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation? Heb. 1:14

NOT YET: [We] are guarded for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been put to grief in various trials. 1 Peter 1:3-6

4. ADOPTION

ALREADY: For you didn't receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" Rom 8:15

NOT YET: We ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for adoption, the redemption of our body. Rom. 8:23

5. FULFILLMENT OF SCRIPTURE

ALREADY: Now after John was taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the Good News of the Kingdom of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand! Repent, and believe in the Good News." Mark 1:14

NOT YET: (In speaking of the yet future destruction of Jerusalem, Jesus said), "These are days of vengeance, that all things that are written may be fulfilled." Luke 21:22

6. RESURRECTION

ALREADY: If then you were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God. Col. 3:1

ALREADY: You were also raised with him... in the working of God, who raised him from the dead. Col. 2:12

ALREADY: [God] raised us up with Him, and made us to sit with him in the heavenly places... Eph. 2:5-6

NOT YET: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, becoming conformed to his death; if by any means I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. Phil. 3:10-11

NOT YET: No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up in the last day. John 6:44

7. ETERNAL LIFE

ALREADY: Most certainly I tell you, he who hears my word, and believes him who sent me, has eternal life, and doesn't come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life. John 5:24

NOT YET: As in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order; Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. I Cor. 15:22-23

8. DEFEAT OF SATAN/EVIL

ALREADY: And the word of God remains in you, and you have overcome the evil one. I John 2:14

ALREADY: The prince of this world has been judged. John 16:11

NOT YET: Your adversary, the devil, walks around like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. I Peter 5:8

NOT YET: The God of peace will quickly crush Satan under your feet. Rm. 16:20

9. REIGN OF CHRIST

ALREADY: Having stripped the principalities and the powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it. Col 2:15

NOT YET: He must reign until he has put all enemies under his feet. I Cor. 15:25

10. SANCTIFICATION/PERFECTION

ALREADY: For by one offering he has perfected forever those who are being sanctified. Heb. 10:14

NOT YET: May the God of peace himself sanctify you completely. May your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. I Thes. 5:23

11. JUDGMENT

ALREADY: He who believes in him is not judged. He who doesn't believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the one and only Son of God. John 3:18

NOT YET: Be patient therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord... Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand...Behold, the judge stands at the door. James 5:7-9

SUMMARY

Christians universally believe that we are living in the New Covenant and do not notice the contradiction with their yet unfulfilled futurist eschatology. Jesus said that the whole of the Law and Prophets had to be fulfilled before the Mosaic law passed away. "Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you...not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished." Matt. 5:17. Those who still hold to unfulfilled Bible prophecies need to question whether their beliefs exhibit a misunderstanding of the manner or nature in which all Bible prophecy has been fulfilled, because it surely has been fulfilled and we are in the New Covenant.