

Lesson #17

Tasting the Powers of the Age to Come

We have seen how the first three elements of the foundational principles in Hebrews 6:1-2 represent the present preparation strategy and the last two represent the powers to be realized in the age to come.

1) Present Preparation Strategy	2) Powers of the Age to Come
1) Repentance from dead works and faith toward God. 2) Doctrines of baptisms (or washings) 3) Laying on of Hands	4) Resurrection of the dead 5) Eternal Judgment

However, even though we are still in this present age, the powers of the age to come are not unavailable to us in this present age. In the context, we read about those who have “...*tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come*” (see Heb. 6:5).

Resurrection Power in This Present Age

The resurrection of the dead is an accepted belief among Christians, though few in modern culture seem to believe resurrection of the dead has much practical application in this present age. But we should not be surprised that people can be healed or raised from the dead in this present age. We know that Jesus did so in this present age. And did not He say, “...*he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also...*” (John 14:12)? We see this fulfilled in Acts chapter 9 where Peter raised Tabitha from the dead (see Acts 9:36:41) and there are many more historical and modern day instances of people being raised from the dead in the name of Jesus.

The Bible has a lot to say about the authority made available to us in this age. One such passage is found in Paul’s prayer for the Ephesians where he prayed...

...that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.

— Ephesians 1:17-21 (NKJV)

This passage provides a pretty impressive list of benefits! Wisdom, revealed insights, clarity of calling and purpose, our worth in God's sight, and delegated power are all available to us. But notice that these things are available in both the this age and the age to come! I have observed that we Christians tend to readily believe that we will have power in the age to come, but struggle to believe that we can exercise such spiritual power and authority in this present age. Yet Verse 21 above makes is quite clear that we have access to extraordinary power in both the present age and the age to come.

Jesus IS

The "future only" idea of resurrection power is not unique to our day. Martha had the same mentality just before Jesus raised her brother Lazarus from the dead. Jesus said, "*Your brother will rise again.*" She replied, "*I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day*" (John 11:23-24). But Jesus replied, "*I AM the resurrection*" (emphasis added).

Even though the resurrection at the end of the age is future, Jesus is not, He was present with Mary and Martha then and he *IS* present with us now! He lives today just as He did then. Therefore, we can enjoy certain benefits of the future now, because Jesus *IS* present now. He *IS* with us always, even to the end of the age (Matt 28:20).

When Moses asked God His name, God said, "I AM WHO I AM. Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'" (see Exodus 3:14). So, when the Great I AM is with us, certain restrictions that are normally imposed by time are lifted. This is why, through the Spirit of Jesus who is with us in this present age, resurrection is also with us in this present age.

When we say "Jesus *IS*" we are saying that Jesus transcends time and space. Jesus made that claim and asserted His deity when He said, "... *before Abraham was, I AM*" (see John 8:58). Paul referred to Jesus saying we must believe that "He IS" (see Heb 11:6). "He IS" is simply the third person version of the first person statement "I AM."

Judgment In This Age

The second element of the powers of the age to come is Eternal Judgement. The principle of judgement is designed to put the fear of God in our hearts. But in our "politically correct" society, suggesting that a calamity or someone's demise was the judgment of God is usually frowned upon. Most of us are reluctant to make such assessments. However, without the fear of God, we lack wisdom because the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Prov 9:10). Without this foundational principle, there is a hole in our foundation and we will find it difficult to discern good and evil (see Heb 5:14).

As with resurrection, we see examples of judgment being manifested in this present age. A man named Elymas, is an example. He was a sorcerer who was resisting and hindering Paul's work of ministry. Paul spoke to him saying,

"...O full of all deceit and all fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord? And now, indeed, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a time." And immediately a dark mist fell on him, and he went around seeking someone to lead him by the hand.

Paul also warned the Christians at Corinth not to test his authority, implying that he held power, not only for their good, but also for their destruction if need be (see 2 Cor 10: 1-8). In His letter to the Galatians, he declared that anyone who brought a different gospel would be accursed (see Gal 1:6-9). We also see in Acts that Peter spoke judgment upon Ananias and Sapphira when they lied to the Holy Spirit. They died on the spot! (see Acts 5:1-10).

History records other instances of people dropping dead in the presence of the Lord. One such case was recorded during a sermon being preached by George Whitefield (1714-1770) during the Great Awakening. As he preached in Yorkshire from a gallows scaffold on the topic, "*It Is Appointed unto Man Once to Die*," a shriek came from the audience and a man dropped dead. After a brief pause, another did the same.¹

Redemptive Judgement

Since resurrection in this present age is not permanent, but only a taste of the powers of the age to come, it stands to reason that judgements in this present age are also only a taste of the power of the age to come and are not permanent/eternal. This is why we say that judgements in this present age are redemptive in nature. By "redemptive judgement," we mean judgements that are used to get someone's attention that they might be saved. Paul instructed the Corinthians to exercise their spiritual authority for judgement in the case of a man who was involved in a particularly heinous sin.

deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

— 1 Corinthians 5:5 (NKJV)

In this example it is clear that the purpose of judgement was redemptive in nature, which leads us to believe that the other examples cited were most likely redemptive as well. Even in the case of Ananias and Sapphira, we cannot definitively say that their judgement was eternal in nature. It is certainly possible that their flesh was destroyed that their spirits might be saved. God chastens those whom He loves that they may partake in His holiness (see Heb 12:6-10).

God is not waiting for us to fail so He can judge us. He doesn't need any more evidence against us. Every one of us have sinned and, as a result, we were already under judgement. God's nature is love and redemption - as demonstrated by the vicarious suffering of Christ. He is merciful and mercy triumphs over judgement (see James 2:13). He is patient and longsuffering, not willing that any should perish, but desiring that all come to repentance (see 2 Peter 3:9).

¹Pratney, Revival, Principles to Change the World, p. 103

The Down Payment

It is a common question: “If the powers of the age to come are available now, how do we access them?” The short answer is: “We access the powers of the age to come through the Holy Spirit.” The Apostle Paul described the gift of the Holy Spirit as a down payment or guarantee of the full payment that is to come later, which is our future inheritance.

In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

— Ephesians 1:13-14 (NKJV)

According to the Strong's Greek Dictionary, guarantee (*earnest* in KJV) is the Greek word: *arrhabon*), meaning *a pledge, i.e. part of the purchase-money or property given in advance as security for the rest*. This is exactly what the Holy Spirit is to us, a down payment given in this present age guaranteeing the full inheritance that is promised to us in the age to come.

Though the benefits of the age to come that we experience in this present age are not the full payment, few of us are using this earnest payment to its fullest capacity. The down payment alone is more powerful than we realize. It was by this earnest payment (the Holy Spirit), that Jesus accessed the promises of the future resurrection in this present age and raised Lazarus from the dead. Through this taste, He instructed us to win the lost, heal the sick, raise the dead, cast out demons, disciple nations, bind up the broken hearted, and set at liberty those who are bound.

This earnest payment makes everything we see Jesus and the early church doing available to us. This is because everything Jesus did, He did *not* as God, but as a man anointed by the Holy Spirit. The scripture says of Jesus: “... *God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him*” (Acts 10:38). As born again Christians, we have the same Holy Spirit in us that Jesus had!

Therefore, the powers of the age to come (resurrection & judgement), though they are future events, can be accessed in this present age by using our down payment - the Holy Spirit. The portion we have now is more than sufficient for any situation we find ourselves in. Our God has not left us in a position of weakness, but has made every provision for victory and success.

In the next lesson, we will examine how Jesus and others accessed the powers of the age to come.