

## The Already & The Not Yet, 4 pgs

### Misconceptions

Jesus ... saw a man who had been blind from birth. <sup>2</sup>his disciples asked, *why was this man born blind?* So far this question is entirely appropriate. It envisions a rational cause and effect universe governed by the will of a supernatural being. Notice that **there is no doubt that the man's blindness was an abnormality caused by God's judgment for sin.** *Was it because of his own sins or his parents' sins? neither ... This happened so the power of God could be seen [lit, manifest or displayed] in him [by his miraculous healing], Jn.9:1-3.* Here Jesus corrects the common narrow perception that God is continually watching us and is punishing specific misdeeds. **This restrictive viewpoint is usually paired with the idea that prosperity must be God's reward for a righteous life.** A reading of **Job, 1 Sam.25** (Nabal), or **1 Ki.20:35-21:4, 9-24** (Ahab) will dispel both notions because God is sovereign and does as he pleases. To us, **treating people differently sounds unfair because it is unequal.** However, such thinking shows our ignorance about the status of mankind after the Fall and the complexity of God's designs.

### 2 sets of tensions

**Lk.13** involves two sets of principles that describe the tensions of life. The first set refers to **the uncertainty of the next moment** and **the certainty that we will have a final moment** in this life ... *Jesus was informed that Pilate [Roman governor of Judea who held the office of magistrate] had murdered some people from Galilee as they were offering sacrifices at the Temple, Lk.13:1. [ had his armed soldiers go into the temple in Jerusalem and slaughter unarmed men who were offering sacrifices to God – he mingled their blood with that of their animal sacrifices – aka **sacrilege**].*

Events have led to death and the end of further life-opportunities for these people. When Jesus hears about this, **his comments astonish everyone.** He implies that all of us deserve to die. What is surprising is that so many of us have been spared for so long by the mercy of God. We all stand under the sentence of death because death is the penalty for sin and all of us have sinned, **Rom.5.** **Jesus is referring to the wrath of God that we constantly live under.** This represents our standing before God as sinners! It is **already our status** when we are born as descendants of disobedient Adam.

Jesus continued, *Do you think those murdered Galileans were worse sinners than all the other people from Galilee? Is that why they suffered? Not at all! And you will perish too [just as surely as they did] unless you repent of your sins and turn to God.* Then he mentions another earlier incident, *And what about the eighteen people who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them? Were they [punished because they were] the worst sinners in Jerusalem? No, and I tell you again [repetition for emphasis] that unless you repent, you will perish, too, Lk.13:2-5.*

Did you hear about the spectators and runners killed and maimed at a **Boston Marathon bombing on Apr.16, 2013**? Have you seen pictures of the Florida swamp where **Valujet Flight 592 crashed on May 11,1996**? Do you think **God brought special severe punishment** upon those people causing them to suffer so much because they were more deserving than any others ... **more deserving than you?** Jesus answers NO! He is not discussing punishment for any particular wicked behavior. **He is referring to our general condition as rebels against God and the peril we are all in**

every moment of every day. How has God dealt with our sinfulness in the past? Remember the great world wide flood of **Gen.6-7**!

### **Sin & death** [see justification by Imputation]

Adam was the head of the human race and his disobedience condemned us all. *When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned [in Adam] ... Adam's one sin brings condemnation for everyone ... Because one person disobeyed God, many became sinners, Rom.5:12-19 .*

God has addressed our sad condition by sending us a Savior. Now, once for all time, Christ has appeared **at the end of the age** to remove sin by his own death as a [substitutionary] sacrifice. And just as each person is destined to die once and after that comes judgment, so also Christ was offered once for all time as a sacrifice to take away the sins of many people. He will come again, not to deal with our sins, but to bring salvation to all who are eagerly waiting for him, **Heb.9:26-28**.

*For this is [how and how much] God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son [up to death as a substitute], so that everyone [not just Jews] who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. God sent his Son into the world ... to save the world through him [his death and resurrection]. There is no judgment against anyone who believes in him. But anyone who does not believe in him has already been judged for not believing in God's one and only Son ... The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in his hands ... Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life [now], but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains [abides, continues] on them, Jn.3:16-36.*

### Window of Opportunity (spoken to county prison inmates)

#### **the UNCERTAINTY of the Next Moment and the CERTAINTY of the Final Moment**

Have no doubts about this, unbelief in Jesus for the forgiveness of sin is rejection, rebellion, and wickedness. You have had plenty of opportunities to learn of him and God's word has been available to you. You couldn't ask for a better situation than you have right here in jail. You're away from those temptations and distractions that have been cluttering and wasting your life until now. **Right here, right now is the best time and place to seek the living God and his righteousness**. Remember that **what will happen in the next moment, week, or year of your life, good or bad, is unknown** but that **the last moment is not only certain, it is fast approaching**. You have this window of opportunity now. Salvation is not automatic, but it is certain. Christ receives everyone who comes to him in faith. **Repentance and faith alone lead us beyond death and judgment to the love of God and new life in his kingdom**. John the Baptist said it this way as he heralded the coming of Jesus. **AT LAST the time promised by God [through the OT prophets] has come! The Kingdom of God is near ! Turn from your sins [repent] and believe this Good News! Mk.1:15.**

**There are 2 polar opposites**, it is **EITHER** one **OR** the other. There is no third option. *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him [the one and only condition] shall not perish but have eternal life. For God sent his Son into the world ... to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son*

... The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in his hands. Whoever believes in the Son **has eternal life [now]**, but whoever rejects the Son **will not see life, for God's wrath remains on them, Jn.3:16-18, 35-36.**

### MY TESTIMONY

In 1969, I was in Seattle, Washington training for the All-Army wrestling team. We were getting ready to compete in the All-Services tournament against the Navy, Air Force, and Marines. I had gotten to know Jim and Dave, a couple Greco-Roman wrestlers who were Christians and spoke to me often about Christ and God's promise of **forgiveness and new life through believing in him**. Once I walked into Jim's room babbling about something foolish and he said, **George, is there any reason not to come to Christ right now?** Well there wasn't, but I didn't commit myself right then. Instead I struggled with those words in my heart. I came to Christ a few days later after realizing that my reasons for not trusting Jesus were all selfish, worthless, and foolish. What could possibly compare with being forgiven through embracing the love of God?

### Our Present Moment & the Ones to Come

The 2<sup>nd</sup> set of principles that describe the tensions of life, The already but not yet holds that believers are already actively taking part in the kingdom of God **[established at the resurrection of Christ]** as it grows in the world. The kingdom will not reach its full expression until sometime in the future. Since Jesus has won the victory over sin, why is it that we still sin, suffer, and die? To understand this seeming contradiction, we must recognize **the already, but not yet tension** of the Gospel **[see my essay, BOTH/AND]**. We who trust Christ are **already** included in his kingdom even though it has **not yet** reached its full expression in the world.

*Dear friends, we are **already** God's children , but he has **not yet** shown us what we will be like when Christ **[next]** appears. But we do know that we will be like him, for we will see him as he really is, 1 Jn.3:2*

*[God] gave Jesus authority over all things ... meaning nothing is left out. But **we have not yet seen all things put under his authority**. What we do see is Jesus, who for a little while was given a position a little lower than the angels; and because he suffered death for us, he is **now** [risen and] crowned with glory and honor. By God's grace, Jesus tasted death for everyone, **Heb.2:8-9**.*

**In this passage, we have a **now**** (we see Jesus crowned with glory), **and a **not yet**** (not everything has been subjected to Christ, *but it will be*). Jesus is the King, and His kingdom is active as it works its way through the world convicting men of sin, righteousness, and judgment. At his trial, *Jesus answered Pilot, My Kingdom is not an earthly kingdom. If it were, my followers would fight to keep me from being handed over to the Jewish leaders. But my Kingdom is not of this world [not physical in nature], Jn.18:36*

**Already, but not yet** describes the tension between the benefits of redemption believers **already** experience in this life, and those benefits that await us at the consummation **when the kingdom has come in its fullness**. Christians enjoy the **alreadyness** of the remission of sins, adoption as God's children, the indwelling Holy Spirit, the certainty of redemption, etc. However, we will not see these realities in totality until the last day (**1 Jn.3:2**), and so they always remain objects of faith. For

instance, the believer **already** has eternal life (**Jn.5:24**), but he is **not yet** physically resurrected. Likewise, the church is a fellowship of persons who are renewed beings in Christ (**2 Cor.5:17**) yet we still sin. Our citizenship is in heaven NOW. *But we are [currently] citizens of heaven , where the Lord Jesus Christ lives. And we are eagerly waiting for him to return as our Savior, Phil.3:20*