

# Already, Not Yet

## HOW TO LIVE IN THE LAST DAYS

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**ABSTRACT:** For now, **Christians live in a great theological tension:** we already possess every spiritual blessing in Christ, but we do not experience the fullness of these blessings yet. In one sense, we are already adopted, redeemed, sanctified, and saved; in another, these experiences are not yet fully ours. Underneath this theological and practical tension are the two comings of Christ. In his first coming, he inaugurated the last days; in his second coming, he will complete them. In the meantime, we live for now in “**the overlap of the ages.**”

For our ongoing series of [feature articles](#) for pastors, leaders, and teachers, we asked David Briones, associate professor of New Testament at Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, to explain the New Testament’s already-not yet framework.

My wife and I have been married for sixteen years, but I can remember our engagement like it was yesterday. It was an unnecessarily *long* engagement — a year and seven days, to be precise. Yet I have no one to blame but myself. The ring burned a hole in my pocket.

I hastily popped the question before meeting my father-in-law’s demands: college degrees in hand, full-time jobs, and \$5,000 in the bank. So, it meant a longer engagement. I was hasty because we knew we wanted to spend the rest of our lives together. But once the excitement of getting engaged wore off, I grew increasingly impatient.

“The redemptive-historical line had been divinely reconfigured. Time itself was reconfigured.”

It felt as if we were *already* married, with her ring symbolizing that long-term commitment. The reality symbolized by the ring, however, was *not yet* a present reality. It was a certain hope in the all-too-distant future.

The Christian life is a lot like that. It is an already-but-not-yet sort of existence, where believers are caught within what Oscar Cullmann calls “the dialectic of present and future.”<sup>1</sup>

## Already, Not Yet

What do I mean? According to Scripture, believers are

- *already* adopted in Christ ([Romans 8:15](#)), but *not yet* adopted ([Romans 8:23](#));
- *already* redeemed in Christ ([Ephesians 1:7](#)), but *not yet* redeemed ([Ephesians 4:30](#));
- *already* sanctified in Christ ([1 Corinthians 1:2](#)), but *not yet* sanctified ([1 Thessalonians 5:23-24](#));
- *already* saved in Christ ([Ephesians 2:8](#)), but *not yet* saved ([Romans 5:9](#));
- *already* raised with Christ ([Ephesians 2:6](#)), but *not yet* raised ([1 Corinthians 15:52](#)).

**We live in a theological tension.** By faith in Christ, all of these spiritual blessings are ours *already*, but the full enjoyment of these blessings is *not yet* ours. This is the life of faith: “the assurance of things hoped for” in the future,

and “the conviction of things not seen” in the present (Hebrews 11:1). This is life between the times.

Underlying this theological tension is a theological structure: the already–not yet framework. It is, according to Cullmann, “the silent presupposition that lies behind all that [the New Testament] says.”<sup>2</sup> The New Testament authors thought, wrote, and lived through the grid of this biblical framework or mindset. It determined the way they spoke about God’s dealings in this world in light of the world to come.

**If we don’t understand this mindset, the theological tension we live in will become a theological disaster.** We will inevitably misread Scripture. **And if we misread Scripture, we will live misled lives. To give one example, not understanding the already–not yet framework might lead a person to think that there are two ways to be saved.** Initial salvation depends entirely on God (Ephesians 2:8), but final salvation depends entirely on us (Romans 5:9), with the practical damage being a legalistic mindset devoid of the gospel.

Theology and Christian living are not oil and water; they are organically connected like seed and tree. So, if we long to think God’s thoughts after him and live for him, then we must follow the way his inspired apostles thought theologically and lived practically. What follows in this essay is not a mere theological exercise. The mind must be informed, but just as importantly, we need our hearts and lives to be transformed. We need to see how this robust theological framework is deeply practical for Christians living between the times.

## **Four Foundational Pillars**

**To grasp the New Testament’s already-not yet mindset, we need to begin with four foundational pillars: eschatology, christology, soteriology, and redemptive history.**

You may be thinking, “Eschatology? Doesn’t that deal with the end times?” That’s right. *Eschatology* means “the study of the last things.” But in the New Testament, eschatology refers not chiefly to millennial views or the timing of the tribulation. Eschatology became more of a mindset on how the future relates to the present. This is especially true of eschatology in Paul’s letters, which will be our primary (though not sole) focus.<sup>3</sup>

Pauline eschatology relates primarily to christology (“the study of Christ”). The two are inextricably connected and mutually interpretive. As Herman Ridderbos notes, “Paul’s ‘eschatology’ is ‘Christ-eschatology.’”<sup>4</sup> Christology completely redefines what we mean by eschatology, and vice versa. For Paul, the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ were *eschatological events* accomplished in history. That is, they were redemptive-historical events — divine actions whereby God revealed himself in word and deed, in time and space — and these redemptive-historical events connected the present with the future; or, perhaps better, they brought “the age to come” into “this age.”<sup>5</sup>

**For example, the outpouring of the Spirit is considered an end-time event in Joel 2, but this end-time event occurred after Christ’s ascension on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2. The future came into the present through the person and work of Christ.** This dynamic is often referred to as *inaugurated or realized eschatology*.

But Christ’s incarnation, death, and resurrection are not merely eschatological events. They are also *salvific events*. Christology and soteriology (“the study of

salvation”) are inseparably interwoven with eschatology.<sup>6</sup> This means that Paul’s eschatology is not only about the future entering the present, but also the present determining the future. The salvation that Christ accomplished and the Spirit applies has present *and* future implications for believers. This is where the practical payoff of the already–not yet framework emerges, though we’ll return to these implications later.

**“We are raised in him and justified in him. And that righteous verdict can never be overturned.”**

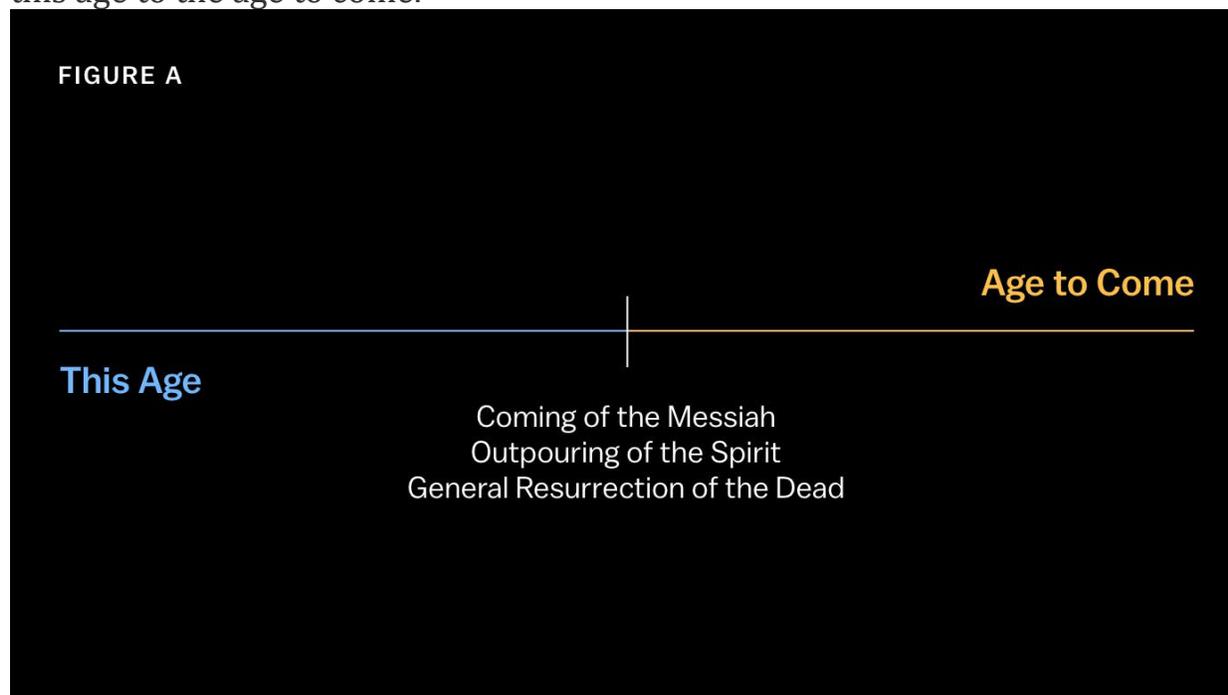
These foundational pillars — eschatology, christology, soteriology, and redemptive history — support Paul’s (and the New Testament’s) eschatological framework. But we should pause to consider how drastically different this framework is from the framework Paul affirmed before his conversion on the road to Damascus. A comparison between the two more accurately reveals how the person and work of Christ radically reconfigured time itself.

## **Time Reconfigured**

Before Paul was blinded on the road to Damascus, he saw “this age” and “the age to come” much differently.

Think of redemptive history as divided between this age and the age to come, with a midpoint in between that separates the two.<sup>7</sup> The midpoint of redemptive history, from the perspective of the Old Testament, is the coming of the eschatological Davidic Messiah,<sup>8</sup> the latter-day outpouring of the Spirit,<sup>9</sup> and the general resurrection of the dead.<sup>10</sup> These are some of the major events that

would usher in “the last days”<sup>11</sup> and mark the eschatological turning point from this age to the age to come.



Nevertheless, Paul’s mindset was radically altered after seeing the light of God’s glorious gospel ([Acts 9:1–19](#); [2 Corinthians 4:4](#), [6](#)). He now could see clearly that the redemptive-historical line had been divinely reconfigured. Time itself was reconfigured.

**The Messiah was no longer he-who-is-to-come but he-who-has-already-come. And Jesus, the one who had already come, was the one** who, through his death and resurrection, became “the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep” ([1 Corinthians 15:20](#)). The resurrection of Christ completely redefined Paul’s Jewish expectation of the general resurrection.

We see this shift particularly in Acts. Luke records how central the resurrection is to Paul’s ministry.<sup>12</sup> Again and again, Paul stands before judges, being tried for proclaiming the resurrection. As he explains to Felix, “It is with respect to *the resurrection of the dead* that I am on trial before you this day” ([Acts 24:21](#);

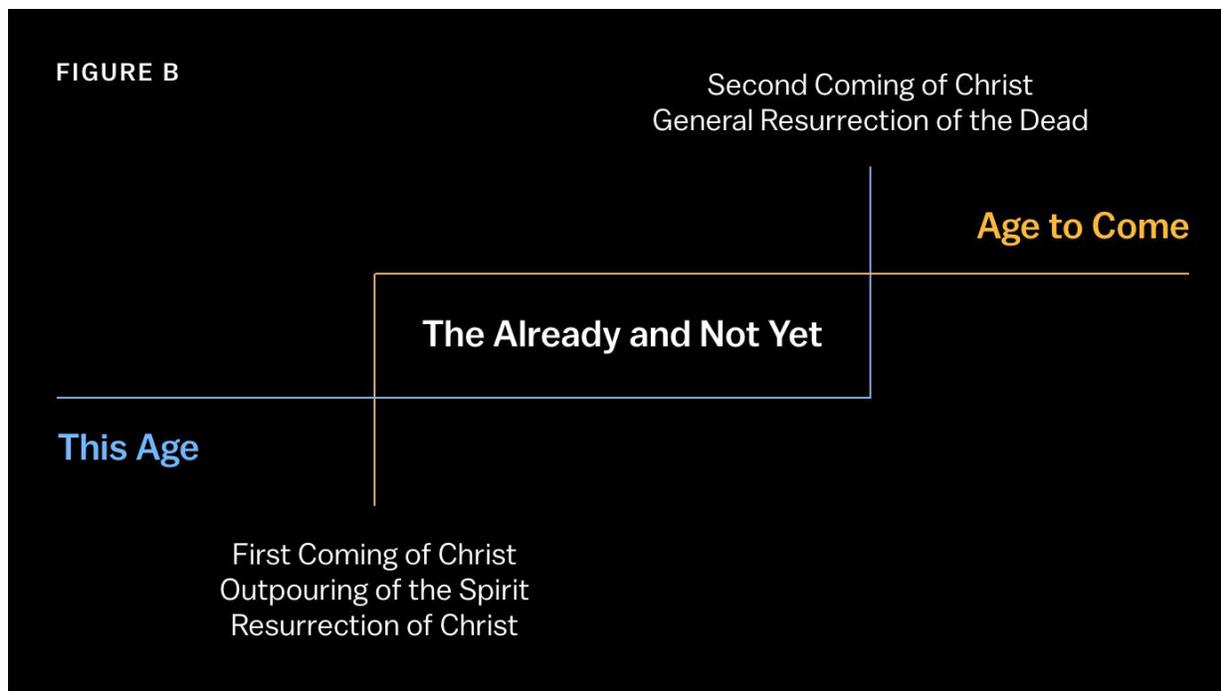
cf. [23:6](#); [26:6](#)). Later, in Rome, he says that “it is because of *the hope of Israel* that I am wearing this chain” ([Acts 28:20](#)).

What is the hope of Israel? It’s spelled out in [Acts 24:15](#): “. . . having a *hope* in God . . . that there will be a *resurrection* of both the just and the unjust.” Israel’s hope was the general resurrection of the dead — the end-time event that would usher in the age to come.

But Paul makes it clear that Israel’s hope of general resurrection and salvation hangs on the resurrection of Jesus Christ: “I stand here testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass: that the Christ must suffer and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles” ([Acts 26:22–23](#)).

“It is clear,” writes Brandon Crowe, “that the resurrection is not simply one event among many but is the quintessential way that Scripture is fulfilled and is the means by which Jesus as Messiah is Lord of all. The resurrection, in short, is the ‘hope of Israel,’ and this hope has broken into history through Jesus of Nazareth.”<sup>13</sup>

Whereas once the general resurrection of the dead was the decisive turning point of time, Paul now considers *Jesus’s* resurrection to be the great turning point,<sup>14</sup> moving us from this age into an overlapping of the ages where we presently experience the age to come.<sup>15</sup> **The midpoint of redemptive history is therefore expanded, bookended by the first and second coming of Christ. These are the “times” between which we live.**



**“Christ’s first coming marks the beginning of the last days. Christ’s second coming will mark the end of the last days.”**

The age to come has come upon this age. That’s why Paul describes Christians as those “on whom *the end of the ages* has come” ([1 Corinthians 10:11](#)). This is why Peter, after witnessing the outpouring of the Spirit, adds the words “in the last days” ([Acts 2:17](#)) into his direct quotation of [Joel 2:28–32](#).<sup>16</sup> This is why Peter also declares that Christ died and rose again “at the end of the times” ([1 Peter 1:19–21](#) author’s translation). And this is why the author of Hebrews highlights God’s speech through the Son “in these last days” ([Hebrews 1:2](#)), who “appeared once for all at *the end of the ages* to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself” ([Hebrews 9:26](#)).

“It is already the time of the end,” writes Cullmann, “and yet it is not *the end*.”<sup>17</sup> Christ’s first coming marks the beginning of the last days.

Christ's second coming will mark the end of the last days. And Christians presently find themselves living in the last days,<sup>18</sup> **in the overlapping of the ages, where salvific benefits are ours already and not yet.**<sup>19</sup>

Anthony Hoekema provides a helpful summary:

The nature of New Testament eschatology may be summed up under three observations: (1) the great eschatological event [i.e., resurrection] predicted in the Old Testament has happened; (2) **what the Old Testament writers seemed to depict as one movement is now seen to involve two stages:** the present age and the age of the future; and (3) the relation between these two eschatological stages is that the blessings of the present (eschatological) age are the pledge and guarantee of greater blessings to come.<sup>20</sup>

## Living Between the Times

How does the already-not yet framework inform the way we live in the tension between Christ's first and second coming? While there are several aspects one can highlight, I want to draw attention to four ways the glorious resurrection of Christ — that time-changing event in redemptive history — relates to our practical Christian living.

### Christ's Physical Resurrection and Ours

As mentioned earlier, the Jews in the Old Testament looked *forward* to the resurrection of the dead. Christians, however, must look *back* to Christ's resurrection *before* they look forward to their own. The reason for this shift in perspective is simple yet profound: the resurrection of Christ is closely united and organically connected with our own resurrection. More specifically,

our *future* physical resurrection is determined by our *present* spiritual resurrection with Christ.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus says, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die” ([John 11:25-26](#)). Notice that Jesus calls himself “the resurrection,” the very reality Jews eagerly anticipated. Quite shockingly, Jesus presents himself as the full embodiment of Israel’s resurrection hope. But he’s not only the resurrection; he’s also life itself, which, in John, refers to eternal life ([John 5:24, 26](#)).

He is “the resurrection and the life” only to those who believe in him ([John 11:25](#)). And those who do believe in him will live, even though they die. They will be raised from the dead at the end of time ([John 5:28-29](#)).

**“We rest on what is true of us in Christ, and we fight until that day when faith becomes sight.”**

So, faith in Christ secures our physical resurrection in the *not yet*, but faith in Christ also results in spiritual resurrection in the *already*. The two are inseparable. Jesus explains, “Whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life. Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live” ([John 5:24-25](#)).

When we believe in Jesus Christ as the resurrection and the life, we are raised spiritually now (“*has passed* from death to life”) and can, with confidence, await our physical resurrection in the future (“those who hear *will live*”). We will enter

eternal life *then* because we have eternal life *now*. And the source of our confidence comes from the undeniable fact of Christ's physical resurrection. Paul connects Christ's resurrection to ours in 1 Corinthians 15. After proclaiming that "Christ has been raised," Paul describes the resurrected Christ as "the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep" ([1 Corinthians 15:20](#); cf. [Colossians 1:18](#)). "Firstfruits" entail the beginning of a harvest — in this case, a "resurrection-harvest."<sup>21</sup> There is a close unity and organic relationship between the resurrection of Christ and our future physical resurrection. Commenting on this close relationship, Richard Gaffin insists that Christ's "resurrection is not simply a guarantee" of our physical resurrection but "a pledge in the sense that it is the actual beginning of the general event."<sup>22</sup> When Christ was raised from the dead, he inaugurated the end-time event of the resurrection, but this event unfolds in two phases for his people: spiritual resurrection with Christ first, then physical resurrection (as we saw in John 5).<sup>23</sup> Paul depicts our spiritual resurrection with striking language in [Ephesians 2:4–6](#): "God . . . made us alive together with Christ . . . and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Of course, we didn't physically accompany Christ into the age to come or the new creation, but we rose spiritually *with him* because we are *in him*.

"If anyone is *in Christ*," Paul says, "new creation" ([2 Corinthians 5:17](#)). Notice that I didn't quote the ESV, which says, "*he is a new creation*." The Greek simply says, "new creation" (*kainē ktisis*). Believers are individually transformed into new creations, but they also enter into the new creation through union with Christ. They enter into a new world.<sup>24</sup> As J.C. Ryle notes, "There is a glorious dwelling place provided by Jesus Christ for all His believing people. The world

that now is, is not their rest: they are pilgrims and strangers in it. Heaven is their home.”<sup>25</sup>

Our spiritual resurrection in the *already* makes our physical resurrection in the *future* certain. As one Puritan prayed, “My heaven-born faith gives promise of eternal sight, my new birth a pledge of never-ending life.”<sup>26</sup>

“Our spiritual resurrection in the already makes our physical resurrection in the future certain.”

But why is this the case? Because Christ has been raised! He is “the fountain-head of the resurrection.”<sup>27</sup> “For,” Paul writes, “as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ” (1 Corinthians 15:21–23).

Our future is certain because the risen Jesus, the hope of Israel, is *our* hope.

## Christ’s Resurrection and Our Justification

When Christ was raised from the dead, he was declared by God to be righteous. After all, he was sinless (2 Corinthians 5:21), obeyed the law perfectly (Matthew 5:17), and bore the sins of his people on the cross (1 Corinthians 15:3; Galatians 3:13). Christ’s resurrection was therefore his justification. He was declared to be in the right with God. As Geerhardus Vos notes, “Christ’s resurrection was the *de facto* declaration of God in regard to his being just. His quickening bears in itself the testimony of his justification.”<sup>28</sup>

Of course, Jesus’s justification (or vindication) differs from ours in one unique way: he never sinned, never needed forgiveness, and never lacked righteousness.

Instead, he is our perfect representative who bore our sins, absorbed God's wrath, and merited the righteousness that comes to us by faith.

When it comes to Jesus's resurrection as his justification, [1 Timothy 3:16](#) is a key text: "[Christ] was manifested in the flesh, vindicated/justified [*edikaiōthē*] in the Spirit" (cf. [Romans 1:3-4](#)). *Dikaioō* is the Greek verb Paul employs frequently to speak of our justification. But here, he applies it to Jesus, with the Spirit playing a critical role in raising him from the dead ([Romans 8:11](#); cf. [1 Corinthians 15:45](#); [Romans 8:9](#); [2 Corinthians 3:17-18](#)).

As with resurrection, our justification is closely tied to Jesus's justification/vindication. We see this in Paul's description of Jesus as the one "who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification [*dikaiōsin*]" ([Romans 4:25](#)).

Gaffin describes this connection vividly: "A dead Christ is an unjustified Christ, and an unjustified Christ means an unjustified believer."<sup>29</sup> Conversely, a raised Christ is a justified Christ, and a justified Christ means a justified believer. We are raised in him and justified in him. And that righteous verdict can never be overturned. It has no expiration date. It is the same verdict rendered to Christ, which is his forever. Through our union with the Beloved, what is his is ours ([Song of Solomon 2:16](#); [1 Corinthians 1:30](#); [Philippians 3:9](#); [2 Corinthians 5:21](#); [Hebrews 10:14](#)).

**“Theology and Christian living are not oil and water; they are organically connected like seed and tree.”**

**In fact, the righteous verdict we receive in Christ is *eschatological*.** It comes from the future. It is the verdict that will be rendered on the final day when the dead are raised, and God judges the just and the unjust from the throne. Hence, Paul can declare, “Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died — *more than that, who was raised* — who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us” ([Romans 8:33–34](#); cf. [Romans 3:21–26](#)).

The person and work of Christ, applied in the *present*, secures our *future* salvation. “Since, therefore, we have *now* been justified by his blood, much more *shall we be saved* by him from the wrath of God” ([Romans 5:9](#)). So, it makes sense for Paul to exult in the certain hope that “there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” ([Romans 8:1](#)).

And yet, because we’re in the *not yet*, he can also say that “through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness [*dikaïosunēs*]” ([Galatians 5:5](#)). Paul is not speaking out of both sides of his mouth here. It’s not as if he is saying we have a righteous standing, but we’d better hope that we keep that righteous standing in the future. Instead, Paul is situating the believer’s justification in the already–not yet framework. The righteousness of Christ is ours by faith ([Philippians 3:9](#)), but we eagerly wait for that hidden verdict to be manifested openly on the last day ([Galatians 5:5](#)).

## Resurrection and Christian Judgment

Everything said up till now puts Christian judgment into perspective. Scripture does teach that Christians will stand before God’s judgment seat to give an account of what we have done in the body ([Romans 14:10–12](#); [2 Corinthians 5:10](#); cf. [1 Corinthians 3:12–15](#)). But we must remember that Christian judgment

is *in accordance with* our good works and never *on the basis of* our good works (Psalm 62:12; Proverbs 24:12; Job 34:11; Jeremiah 17:10; 32:19; Matthew 16:27; John 5:28–29; Revelation 20:11–13; 22:12). Our salvation is on the basis of nothing other than the person and work of Jesus Christ alone.

Since we have been justified in Christ and spiritually raised with Christ *now*, we will stand before the judgment seat as righteous *then*. As Gaffin argues, “If believers appear at the final judgment as already resurrected bodily, then they will appear there as *already openly justified*.”<sup>30</sup> To be sure, everyone will be resurrected bodily on the last day. The major difference is that believers, having been raised spiritually and declared righteous by faith, will have that hidden verdict of righteousness become a public verdict when physically raised from the dead. We will be “openly acknowledged and acquitted” on the day of judgment,<sup>31</sup> because we have been already justified in Christ.

James Buchanan explains this clearly: “Justification, considered as the pardon of a sinner and his acceptance as righteous in the sight of God, is by faith; but judgment is according to works; and it is not a second Justification — as if there might be two — the one by faith, the other by works — it is one and the same Justification, which is actually bestowed in the present life, and authoritatively declared and attested at the judgment-seat.”<sup>32</sup>

In the meantime, we wait eagerly for the certain hope of righteousness, and can confidently sing the end of that great hymn “My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less”:

When I shall launch in worlds unseen,  
 Oh, may I then be found in him;  
 Dressed in his righteousness alone,  
 Faultless to stand before the throne.<sup>33</sup>

On that day, we will stand faultless in the faultless One, who loved us, who gave himself up for us, and who was raised for our justification — never to die again (Romans 6:9).

## Resurrection and Sanctification

**Though our future is certain, our sanctification can be turbulent.**

**Sanctification is an ongoing battle.** Sometimes we win; sometimes we lose.

We're constantly in flux. We have mountaintop experiences before lying defeated in dark valleys. We take three steps forward before quickly taking two steps (or four steps) back. In the midst of this distressing battle, viewing one's sanctification through the already-not yet lens keeps you from feeling spiritually double-minded and powerless. What do I mean?

The spiritually double-minded are Christian versions of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, only they oscillate between the old self and the new self. In their thinking, they are living in the new man when they resist temptations to sin. But when they sin, they revert back to the old man. Two men or two selves are warring within them, and they feel spiritually double-minded as they constantly transform from one man to the other. When this happens, some even think they are moving in and out of a state of salvation.

This sort of unbiblical thinking is detrimental to one's spiritual vitality. It's a classic case of bad theology ruining good Christian practice. You can't fall in and out of salvation, and you certainly can't oscillate between the old self and the new self.

**We need to recall biblical indicatives — true statements about believers in the *already*.** You are definitively sanctified through union with Christ ([1 Corinthians 1:30](#)). You have “been set free from sin” ([Romans 6:7](#)). “Sin will have no dominion over you” ([Romans 6:14](#)). “You have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God” ([Colossians 3:3](#)). The list could go on and on. These things are true of you *now*, but they are *not yet* fully experienced.

This reality about our sanctification may sound like a contradiction, but it’s actually a theological paradox. Paul can say, “You have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self” ([Colossians 3:9–10](#)), and, in the same breath, he can say, “Put to death . . . what is earthly in you” ([Colossians 3:5](#)), and “Put on . . . compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience” ([Colossians 3:12](#)).

Why do we need to put off something we’ve already put off and put on something we’ve already put on? **This is the paradox of the already-not yet life. We are new creations in Christ, but indwelling sin will remain in us this side of glory.** It’s not a battle over which self ultimately will overcome us and determine our eternal destiny. We’re either in Adam or in Christ ([Romans 5:12–21](#)). If you’re in Christ, then you’ve been raised with him and seated in the heavenly places. And if you’ve been raised with Christ, you can be neither spiritually double-minded nor spiritually powerless.

**“If we are to live biblically in between the times, we must trust indicatives and obey imperatives.”**

If we are to live biblically in between the times, we must trust indicatives and obey imperatives. **Biblical indicatives are another way of expressing**

**the *already*: “You are holy!” Imperatives express the *not yet*: “Be holy!” Solely trusting in indicatives will lead to antinomianism (discarding God’s law because we are saved). Merely obeying imperatives will lead to legalism (obeying God’s law in order to be saved). Grace in the gospel opposes both.**

Paul declares that Christians are “under grace” ([Romans 6:14](#)). That means we are no longer enslaved to sin (indicative; [Romans 6:6](#)). But that also means we don’t let sin reign in our mortal bodies (imperative; [Romans 6:12](#)). How do we do that? We let indicatives fuel our obedience to God. Recall what is *already* true in order to be obedient in the *not yet*.

Suppose, for example, that you’re feeling spiritually lethargic one day. After seeing or thinking about something tempting, you sense sin in your heart being aroused in your mortal body, and you long to satisfy its demands. Sin wants you to satisfy your longings with its cheap thrills and empty offers of satisfaction. And in the moment, you think that sounds like a great idea.

What do you do in the midst of temptation? At that moment, remind yourself of what is true of you in Christ. Pray God’s word over your sin-stricken soul. Say, “The same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead, that spiritually raised me from the dead in him, dwells in me powerfully ([Romans 8:11](#); [Ephesians 1:19–20](#))!” Think about that reality for a second. You have divine power at your disposal. You have access to a storehouse of strength for the battle. God doesn’t leave you to fend for yourself. He equips you for the fight ([Philippians 2:12–13](#)). The Spirit that raised our Lord from death enables us to “put to death the deeds of the body” ([Romans 8:13](#)). And so, we fight.

We don't claim perfect victory, but we also don't claim utter defeat. In between the times, we rest on what is true of us in Christ, and we fight until that day when faith becomes sight, and everything in the *not yet* becomes ours.

## The Future in the Present

The resurrection of Christ is central to Christianity (1 Corinthians 15:12-19). There is indeed no hope without it. But Christ's resurrection is also central to Christian living in the last days. It is a time-changing event that reconstitutes where we live and how we live. We live "in Christ" and we live for Christ in the overlap of the ages. His defeat of death has ushered in the age to come, and we now get glimpses of the future — foretastes of the heavenly world we call home (Hebrews 6:5).

He is risen. And that means we can be certain of our physical resurrection. We can be convinced of our righteous standing before God. We can be calm on the final day of judgment. And we can be courageous in our fight against sin.

Living between the times is riddled with theological and practical tension. But adopting the already-not yet mindset will better equip saints to read the Scriptures faithfully and live out the gospel powerfully, all the while giving thanks to the God who raised Jesus from the dead, and brought the future into the present.

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1. Oscar Cullmann, *Christ and Time: The Primitive Christian Conception of Time and History*, trans. Floyd V. Filson (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1950), 146. ↵
2. Cullmann, *Christ and Time*, 146. ↵
3. Geerhardus Vos hailed Paul as “the father of Christian eschatology” (*Pauline Eschatology* [Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1994], 175). ↵
4. Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology*, trans. John Richard de Witt (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 49. ↵
5. In speaking of how heavenly realities come to bear on our earthly lives, Vos says of the latter, “The higher world [i.e., heaven] is in existence there [i.e., on earth], and there is no escape for the Christian from its [i.e., the heavenly world’s] supreme dominion over his life. *Thus, the other world, hitherto future, has become present*” (37–38; my emphasis). ↵
6. Vos says, “Not only the Christology but also the Soteriology of the Apostle’s teaching is so closely interwoven with the Eschatology, that, were the question put, which of the strands is more central, which more peripheral, the eschatology would have as good a claim to the central place as the others” (*Pauline Eschatology*, 28–29). ↵
7. I have slightly adapted Oscar Cullmann’s diagram in *Christ and Time*, 82. ↵
8. See [2 Samuel 7:12–16](#); [Psalms 21; 72; 89; 110; 132](#); [Amos 9:11](#); [Isaiah 9:6–7](#); [11:1–9](#); [Ezekiel 37:24–25](#); [Zechariah 6:12–13](#); [12:7–8](#). ↵
9. See [Joel 2:28–32](#); [Isaiah 32:15](#); [44:3](#); [Ezekiel 36:27](#); [37:14](#); [39:29](#). ↵
10. See [Job 19:26–27](#); [Isaiah 26:19](#); [Hosea 6:2](#); [Daniel 12:1–2](#). ↵
11. See [Genesis 49:1](#); [Numbers 24:14](#); [Deuteronomy 4:30](#); [31:29](#); [Isaiah 2:2](#); [Jeremiah 30:24](#); [Daniel 10:14](#); [Hosea 3:5](#). ↵
12. See Brandon D. Crowe, *The Hope of Israel: The Resurrection of Christ in the Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020). ↵
13. Crowe, *Hope of Israel*, 85–86. ↵
14. “We must think of Christ’s death and resurrection as the central event that launched the latter days. This pivotal event of death and resurrection is eschatological because it launched the beginning of the new creation” (G.K. Beale, “The New Testament and New Creation,” in *Biblical Theology: Retrospect and Prospect*, ed. Scott Hafemann [Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2002], 163). ↵
15. According to [Hebrews 6:5](#), we taste “the powers of the age to come” on earth. ↵
16. The additional words “in the last days” occur only one other time in the LXX, [Isaiah 2:2](#). More than likely, Peter is alluding to that text. For a closer analysis of Old Testament and New Testament texts where the phrase “last days” appears, see Vos, *Pauline Eschatology*, ch. 1; and G.K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), ch. 3. ↵
17. Cullmann, *Christ and Time*, 145; emphasis original. ↵
18. See [1 Timothy 4:1–3](#); [2 Timothy 3:1–5](#); [2 Peter 3:1–7](#); [James 5:3](#); [Jude 14–19](#). ↵
19. Interestingly, this is how Luke eschatologically structures the book of Acts. As the disciples watch Jesus ascend into heaven, “two men . . . said, ‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven [first coming], will come in the same way [second coming] as you saw him go into heaven’” ([Acts 1:10–11](#)). Before this happened, they asked Jesus if this was the “time” when he would “restore the kingdom to Israel” ([Acts 1:6](#)), but Jesus simply responds, “It is not for you to know *times* or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority” ([Acts 1:7](#)). *Time* is restructured into *times*. This sets the scene for the foundational work of the apostles in between the times. ↵
20. Anthony Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 21–22. ↵
21. Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., *Resurrection and Redemption: A Study in Paul’s Soteriology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1987), 34. ↵

22. Gaffin, *Resurrection and Redemption*, 35. ↵
23. Gaffin writes, “The unity of the resurrection of Christ and the resurrection of believers is such that the latter consists of two episodes in the experience of the individual believer — one which is past, already realized, and one which is future, yet to be realized. In the period between the resurrection and parousia of Christ, any believer is one who has already been raised from the dead, and is yet to be raised. . . . His resurrection is both already and not yet” (*Resurrection and Redemption*, 60). ↵
24. Vos writes, “For the one who has undergone this experience of having become ‘in Christ,’ not merely individual subjective conditions have been changed, but ‘the old things are passed away, new things have come into being.’ There has been created a totally new environment, or, more accurately speaking, *a totally new world*, in which the person spoken of is an inhabitant and participator” (*Pauline Eschatology*, 47). ↵
25. J.C. Ryle, “Heaven,” Helmingham Tract Series 14 (Stirling, UK: Drummond’s Tract Depot, n.d.). ↵
26. *The Valley of Vision*, ed. Arthur Bennett (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1975), 301. ↵
27. Vos, *Pauline Eschatology*, 10. ↵
28. Vos, *Pauline Eschatology*, 151. ↵
29. Gaffin, *Resurrection and Redemption*, 124. ↵
30. Richard Gaffin, *By Faith, Not by Sight: Paul and the Order of Salvation*, 2nd ed. (Philipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2013), 113; emphasis original. ↵
31. Westminster Larger Catechism, Q&A 90. ↵
32. James Buchanan, *The Doctrine of Justification: An Outline of Its History in the Church and of Its Exposition from Scripture* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1867), 238. ↵
33. Edward Mote, “My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less” (1834). ↵

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