

## **Part IV**

### **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.

<b>Present Preparation Strategy</b>	<b>Powers of the Age to Come</b>
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 living prior to the first resurrection, the powers of the resurrection and the age to come are not completely unavailable. In the context of these principles we read about those who have “...tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come” (see Heb. 6:5). In our study, this represents the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgement. If we are to believe that the powers of the age to come can be tasted in this present age, we should be able to see it modeled in the early church. And we can!

In this final chapter, we will look at both of the last two foundational principles, the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgement, as they apply to this present age.

## **Chapter Eighteen**

### **Resurrection of the Dead and Judgment in This Present Age**

#### **Resurrection Power in This Present Age**

The resurrection from the dead has always been a basic belief of Christianity that all Christians acknowledge, but few seem to believe resurrection of the dead has much practical application in this present age. But the Bible has a lot to say about the authority that is available to those who believe. One passage is found in Paul's prayer for the Ephesians that the eyes of their understanding would be opened that they might realize the power and authority made available to them through Christ's resurrection.

...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! Wisdom, revealed insights, clarity of calling and purpose, our worth in God's sight, and delegated power are all available to us. Not only are they available, but they are available in the same proportions as the power raised Jesus from the dead!

I have observed that Christians tend to readily believe that we will have power in the age to come, but struggle to believe that we can exercise much spiritual power and authority in this present age. Yet Paul makes it quite clear in this passage that we need to have our eyes opened to the fact that this power is also available to us in this present age!

#### **Kingdom Authority**

This book has presented a vision of the Kingdom of God, not only as a spiritual kingdom that currently exists, but as a practical government that will be established on earth when Jesus returns. It has also been pointed out that this "government of God on earth" was the primary understanding that Jesus taught his disciples concerning the kingdom of God. Knowing and preaching this message is also an element in releasing the powers of the age to come in this present age. Consider the first verse in the Bible where "preaching the gospel of the kingdom" is mentioned.

And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people. — Matthew 4:23 (NKJV)

Notice what that the "healing of all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease" is directly

linked to preaching of the gospel of the kingdom, which appears at the resurrection. Healing of sickness and disease is a little bit of resurrection life in advance. It is a taste of the powers we will have in the age to come where we will be immortal and totally free from disease, aging and death. Once our eyes have been opened to kingdom purpose and we have a sense of direction, there is an amazing amount of authority that becomes available to us to accomplish it.

### **Jesus IS the Resurrection**

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 again, “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.

The word “IS” is simply the third person version of “AM” which is in the first person. Jesus used this same concept in asserting 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). 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, resurrection is with us, even in this present age.

We should not be surprised that people can be healed or raised from the dead in this present age. Concerning raising the dead, we know that Jesus did so in this present age. But He also said, “...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). There are many more historical and modern day instances of people being raised from the dead in the name of Jesus.

### **Judgment In This Age**

We also see examples of judgment in this age. A man named Elymas, a sorcerer, 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 (Acts 13:10-11 NKJV).

Paul also warned the Christians at Corinth not to test his authority, implying that he held the power for their destruction of 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). Peter spoke judgment upon Ananias and Sapphira when they lied to the Holy Spirit and they died on the spot! (see Acts 5:1-10).

History also records other instances of people dropping dead in the presence of the Lord. One such case was recorded during the preaching of George Whitefield (1714-1770) 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.<sup>13</sup>

In these examples, we see that sometimes the judgments of God are used in a redemptive sense. That is, they were used as drastic measures to get someone's attention that their soul might be saved. In other cases, judgment was immediate physical death, which seems to indicate that the judgment was final or eternal.

These things should 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). These are extreme cases, nevertheless judgment in this present age is biblical and God does have the right to judge people. He gives life and He can take it away. That is why we call Him God.

### The Error of Religion

Again, the Hebrews were being chided for failure to walk out the foundational principles. They should have been teaching others, but had ceased hearing from God, and were not discerning the difference between good and evil. It is interesting to note how the faults raised in Hebrews 5:11-14 are corresponding negatives of the three preparation principles. See the chart below.

	Principle One	Principle Two	Principle Three
Principles of Preparation	Repentance from Dead Works and Faith Toward God	Baptisms/ Washings (Holiness/Cleansing)	Laying on of Hands
Foundational Purpose	To Know Him And Do Good Works	To Be Holy As He Is Holy	To Be Disciples Who Make Disciples
Faults	Dullness or (Lazy) in Hearing Resulting in No Faith Toward God	Failure to Discern Good and Evil Resulting in Sin	Failure to Teach Others Results in Not Making Disciples

These faults are what happens when our Christianity becomes a dead religion instead of a living relationship with Christ.

1. In religion, we cease to hear God and, since faith comes by hearing, we have no faith. Thus our works become dead.
2. In religion, we fail to discern good and evil and sin creeps in. The pursuit and passion for holiness begins to wane.
3. In religion, we lose the ability to teach others. We may continue to present teachings, but the ability to impart life changing power disappears and we do not make new disciples.

Therefore, in religion, we are unskilled in the word of righteousness (Heb 5:13) have little access to the powers of the age to come.

Yet, as Paul chided the Hebrews (assuming he is the author of the letter to the Hebrews) for becoming dull (lazy) in hearing, he was aware that he too must continue pursuing the

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<sup>13</sup> Pratney, *Revival, Principles to Change the World*, p. 103

foundational principles. This first principle, with its purpose to know God and do good works, is reflected in Paul's letter to the Philippians when he says "...that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection" (Phil 3:10). Paul knew that knowing Jesus (having a close relationship with Him) would result in knowing or experiencing resurrection power in this present age.

### **The Word of Righteousness**

Once again referring to the context of the foundational principles (specifically Hebrews 5:13-14), the Hebrews were only partaking of milk and were unskilled in the word of righteousness. Solid food, is for the mature who, by reason of use, have their senses trained to discern good and evil. Let's take a closer look at this phrase, *the word of righteousness*, which is here being called solid food for the mature.

First, let's remember that simply learning the foundational principles is considered partaking of milk. This is for the unskilled; it is receiving only or being taught only. But the person who is teaching them to others is *using* them and thus developing their skill level, growing more mature. Therefore, *the word of righteousness* is not a new topic beyond the foundational principles. It is the same curriculum, only it is being passed on to others. The difference is teaching instead of just being taught, which eliminates the spiritual generation addressed earlier.

The Greek word used here for "righteousness" is *dikaiosisune*. It means *to be like Christ in character and deed*. This is the person who is becoming mature enough to handle Christlike authority and do Christlike deeds, that is, partake of the word of righteousness. This is the person who will taste the powers of the age to come.

### **The Holy Spirit: Down Payment on the Future**

Someone might ask, "If someone is raised from the dead in this present age, does that mean that they will never again experience death?" The answer is no, because as the phrase "*tasting the powers of the age to come*" suggests, it is not the full manifestation of the age to come. Jesus has given us the Holy Spirit which is the down payment or guarantee 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, earnest (Greek: arrhabon), means *a pledge, i.e. part of the purchase-money or property given in advance as security for the rest*.

Though the benefits of the age to come that we experience in this present age are limited, few of us are using this earnest payment to its fullest capacity. This down payment alone is more powerful than we realize. It was by this earnest payment (the Holy Spirit), that Jesus raised, accessed the promise of the future resurrection in this present age and raised Lazarus from the dead. Through this taste, we are able 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 puts everything we see in the life of Jesus Christ within our reach. This is because everything Jesus did, He did as a man anointed by the Holy Spirit, not as God. "... 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). Like Jesus, we too have been given the Holy Spirit.

So we see that the resurrection, judgement, and the powers of the age to come, 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, even though it may be small compared to the full payment, 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 our success.

But why do we see so few people walking in the word of righteousness? The most obvious answer is found in the context of the foundational principles. It is Immaturity. The writer of the book of Hebrews said: "But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." Hebrews 5:14 (NKJV). Many are simply too immature to be trusted with this kind of power and simply have not developed the character to support such authority. Though they have been around long enough, they have not matured, because they have not put what they have learned into practice. As a result they do not discern the evil schemes of the enemy that are designed to neutralize each of the five foundational purposes. We will look at these five enemies in the next chapter.

Nevertheless, let us learn the milk of the word, the foundational principles, use them by imparting them to others, and move on to the word of righteousness which is prepared for those who are of full age.