

Sunday, May 8, 2022 pm

JOURNEY THROUGH THE BIBLE (4)

The Christian Age – Introduced

Today, we continue our Journey Through the Bible study. This is the 4th introductory lesson in this study. We began by noting the 17 time periods that will be the focus of our study. Then we divided the Bible into 3 ages or dispensations. We have addressed the patriarchal age – when God spoke in various ways primarily through the father. And we have addressed the Mosaic age – Biblically the largest dispensation covering the nation of Israel from Mt. Sinai and the giving of the Law (Exodus 20) through the life and ascension of Christ to the establishment of the church in Acts 2. This covered a period of about 1500 years. Today, we want to examine one final introductory lesson by noting the Christian age. So let's get started.

I. Facts about the Christian age

- a. Demographics –
 - i. It began with Pentecost (~AD 30) as recorded in Acts 2. This is the result of Jesus dying on the cross and being resurrected.
 - ii. Biblically it consists of the book of Acts and all the epistles that follow, concluding with Revelation. It consists of the final 2 of the 17 Bible time periods – 16) The early church established & 17) Letters to Christians.
 - iii. Key characters would included Peter, along with the rest of the apostles; Paul – the apostle out of due season; Barnabas, Luke, James the brother of Jesus (he is influential in the church in Jerusalem), Cornelius, and a number of other New Testament characters.
 - iv. It continues even to this day. If the “last days” is the final age, then we are still under this age. It will last until the Lord returns.
- b. Events unfolding during this age –
 - i. The book of Acts is our primary timeline though it is certainly not the Biblical end of recorded events.
 - ii. Acts 2 – records the beginning of the church
 - iii. Acts 3-7 – records the infancy of the church in Jerusalem and Judea – almost exclusively, the gospel was preached to Jews.
 - iv. Acts 8-12 – the gospel spreads as a result of the persecutions of Paul and others.
 1. Philip going to the Samaritans (some Jewish heritage) and the Eunuch (likely a proselyte – Gentile converted to Judaism) – Acts 8
 2. Saul (Paul) is converted in Acts 9 – a pivotal act
 3. Acts 10 – Cornelius, the first FULL Gentile convert
 4. Acts 11 – news from Antioch of Syria at Jerusalem about Gentiles obeying the gospel. Barnabas is sent to investigate. There is reciprocal fellowship as the brethren in Antioch send financial aid to needy brethren in Judea (11:27-30)
 5. NOTE: Acts 11:26 – the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch
 - v. Acts 13-21a – Paul's 3 missionary journeys
 - vi. Acts 21b-28 – Paul's journey from Jerusalem to Rome and interactions there.
 - vii. During this time and beyond, the various letters to churches are written. While we are not certain, the earliest of these letters is believed to be Thessalonians, early 50s.
 - viii. Revelation is the final letter, likely written ~95 AD.
- c. **A note about the gospels** – while the gospels deal with the life of Jesus which was during the Mosaic age, they were written during the Christian age with the intent of introducing and converting people to Christ. The exact dates of these letters are often debated, but most likely the synoptics (Matthew, Mark and Luke) were written in the mid-50s – early-60s. There is debate about which was first –

especially between Matthew and Mark. Luke was written, likely mid 60s before Paul's death (ca ~AD68), and of course it was followed up by Acts. (I will address this in greater detail when we study the life of Jesus in our upcoming apologetics class). John is believed to have been written in the 80s, prior to Revelation, but it was written BY an apostle who was a close eyewitness to Jesus.

II. **The Christian age in God's word**

- a. The Christian age could be described as the age of fulfillment. For we find Biblically, the fulfillment of God's promises that would lead to man's redemption. That really is the focus of this period of time.
- b. ***The fullness of the times*** – Galatians 4:4, Ephesians 1:10 both speak of the fullness of the times. This is a powerful descriptor of the times of Jesus and bring in the Christian age. As noted in our last lesson, this brought to completion the Mosaic age, but it also brought in its place the Christian age. Much of the New Testament addresses this.
- c. ***It was in God's plans from the beginning*** – going back to the Patriarchal and Mosaic ages, one of the points presented throughout was the unfolding of the seed promise which was fulfilled in Christ. And with that fulfillment we also find numerous prophecies associated with a new dispensation (era or age).
 - i. Isaiah 2:2-4 writing ~700 years BC, he spoke of events that would take place in Jerusalem.
 - ii. Daniel 2:44 – Daniel. ~600 BC, clearly prophecies about the time of the Roman Empire and notes that in the days of that empire God would set up an eternal kingdom (His kingdom)
 - iii. Joel 2:28-32 – this is quoted by Peter in Acts 2:17-21 on the day of Pentecost, the focal day of history as far as the Mosaic/Christian ages are concerned.
 - iv. In these passages along with the teachings of the New Testament, it becomes clear that God intended all along to establish His kingdom and He did – cf. Mark 9:1, Colossians 1:13
- d. ***The church/kingdom is established and in existence***
 - i. This age is also called the church age.
 - ii. After Jesus died on the cross and arose from the dead accomplishing redemption and giving us hope, we find the establishment of the church/kingdom.
 - iii. It began as recorded in Acts 2 on the day of Pentecost. In past recent studies we have shown: 1) That the church/kingdom began on Pentecost – prior to that date the kingdom was always spoken of as yet future – see the previous point with verses. Note also Matthew 16:18-19 which ties the church and kingdom together; 2) That they are in essence the same body – descriptive of different roles (just like a man can be a father/husband/man at the same time, or a woman can be a mother/wife/woman at the same time). If you are in the kingdom, you are in the church – Acts 2:47, Ephesians 1:22-23, Colossians 1:13, etc. We are members of His body – Ephesians 1:22-23, Colossians 1:18; and we are citizens of His kingdom – Ephesians 2:19, Philippians 3:20
 - iv. Again be reminded that this kingdom is spiritual – John 18:36-37, Luke 17:21, etc.
- e. ***We are under a new covenant*** –
 - i. The book of Hebrews elaborates on the need for this new covenant – the old was incapable of fulfilling everything that is needed (Heb. 8:7, 13; 10:1-2, etc.) – ultimate forgiveness, access to all, etc. The books of Galatians and Romans help explain the purpose of the old law in relation to the new. But the bottom line is that the Old Law was taken out of the when and nailed to the cross (Colossians 2:14)
 - ii. It is available to all mankind. One of the weaknesses of the Mosaic covenant was its limitations concerning forgiveness and access. It was for the Jews. The new covenant is for everyone. Galatians 3:27-28, John 3:16
 - iii. It is a spiritual covenant based on the shed blood of Jesus – He fulfilled the LOM – cf. Matthew 5:17-19, Colossians 2:14. This event took place at His death – Hebrews 9:14-22.
 - iv. It is revealed in His word – especially the New Testament
- f. ***Jesus is now reigning as Lord and king*** –

- i. He fulfilled messianic prophecies – Luke 24:44, Matthew 5:17-19, etc. Lessons could be devoted to His promised coming. Powerful and detailed passages that demonstrate God HAD TO be behind the process, and thus worthy of our reverence, submission and consideration.
- ii. He is now seated at the right hand of God and reigning – Acts 2:33, Hebrews 10:12, 12:2, etc.
- iii. He is at the center of our faith and everything – John 14:6, Acts 4:12, Hebrews 1:1-2 – God has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, etc.
- g. ***It will last until the He returns*** – we are NOW in this age.
 - i. In scripture it is referred to as “the last days”, cf. Hebrews 1:2, 2 Peter 3:3, 2 Timothy 3:1 – notice the plural description. These texts speak in genetic terms that have existed since this era began.
 - ii. 1 Corinthians 15:24-26 tells us that He is now reigning and must do so until the end. At that time death will be destroyed. So as long as there is death, Jesus is reigning.
 - iii. 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18 notes that He will return and we who belong to Him will meet Him in the air and always be with Him.

III. **Lessons for us**

- a. The dispensation is the final and complete age – there will be no other, NOR will there be a need for it. Jesus has done all that needed to be done until He returns.
- b. There will be no future revelation – if this is the final and complete age, all we have, and need is the word of God. There is no need another revelation, as such would lead to confusion, as we are seeing so much of today. Galatians 1:6-9 bears this out. So does Revelation 22:18-19 (concerning Revelation), etc. 2 John 9-11 warns against transgressing His word, Jude 3 speaks of the faith once for all delivered to His saints.
- c. Because this is the final age, we need to ALWAYS be prepared for it to end.
 - i. This is the final age – there is nothing to indicate another age on this earth. Premillennialist and dispensationalists say that historically there have been 7 dispensations and that we are in the 6th dispensation (dispensation of grace). They declare a 7th dispensation – Jesus reigning on earth for 1000 years. We have demonstrated the errors and problems with this view.
 - ii. Hebrews 9:27 – we will die, then the judgment.
 - iii. 1 Corinthians 15:24 – Jesus is reigning but one day that will end.
 - iv. 1 Peter 3:10ff, etc.
 - v. NOTE: It is important that we understand this because we do not know when this time will come to its end. That is why we must always be prepared.

And thus, we are briefly introduced to the New Testament dispensation or age. We find in its beginning everything needed to establish the kingdom of Christ. He reigns and will continue to do so until He returns for judgment. We are living in this time and must always be prepared therein because we do not know when it might end. Are you ready for His return?