

Are Christians in heaven *now*?

The Bible often speaks of Christians as being in heaven, even as they are still on earth. Ephesians 1:3 and 2:6 says that Christians having been blessed with Christ in the heavenly places: we have been seated with Christ. Other passages indicate the same truth: we have been buried with Christ, and now have been raised with Him (Col. 2:12; 3:1). Are Christians really in heaven *now*?

The key to these passages that seem to bring the future right into the present is to realize that *this is exactly what has happened* because of Jesus Christ. The events associated with the Last Days (for example, the resurrection of believers and the present reign of Christ) have all begun in the first coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. When the Bible speaks of the “Last Days,” it is speaking about the inaugurated reign of Christ at His first coming. The Last Days, also known as “the age to come,” is not just future reality. Peter, in his sermon on the day of Pentecost, says that we have entered the last days (Acts 2:16-17, 33). Hebrews 1:2 says that Christ is the final revelation for the last days. In other words, we have been in the “last days” for the past 2000 years!

In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul understands history in this two-age manner. There is life according to the “present age,” an existence by Satan, sin, and death (2:1-3). It is the Gentile manner of living (4:17-19). It is kingdom ruled by dark powers at work in the sons of disobedience (1:21; 2:2). However, above all these rulers, Christ has been given all authority in heaven and earth, and has raised His people, who were formerly dead, to life and to heaven itself (2:4-7). The very reality of the resurrection is ours in Christ, who has transferred us from the domain of darkness to His kingdom of life and light (Col. 1:13). This is the life of “the age to come” that is ours now in Christ.

Although Christ has brought “the age to come” into the present era, we still live in the overlap with the “present evil age” which has been given to Satan to rule. The coming of the King, Christ Jesus, however, meant the beginning of the end for “the present evil age,” and the beginning of Christ’s reign over all things. This explains why, although we experience the resurrection life of Christ, we have not experienced it fully and completely. For example, our bodies have not been resurrected and renewed. The full measure of resurrection life is ours now in principle, and will be ours completely, finally, and fully when Christ comes back. Then, we will live in a new heavens and new earth where righteousness dwells (2 Peter 3:13, new creation will be inhabited by new creation people).

Hence, we can speak of Christians in heaven right now. Although they live on earth, Christians have been united to Christ in His ascension into heaven and experience the life of heaven *now*. Our life, Paul says, is hid in Christ, and will fully appear when Christ appears (Col. 3:3-4).

The diagram below, modified from Geerhardus Vos’ *Pauline Eschatology*, illustrates the overlap of the ages, and the present resurrected status of Christians. If you’re in Christ, that means that you’re in heaven now. How, then, should this transform your life?

