

“The Two Ages”
Ephesians 1:18-23
(Preached at Trinity, February 16, 2014)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. **Chapter 1** is a great display of God's glory in redeeming His people. From the beginning of the chapter Paul wrote of the glory of God's redeeming grace.
Ephesians 1:3-6 NAU - "Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ, ⁴ just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love ⁵ He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, ⁶ to the praise of the glory of His grace"
2. As we came to the end of the chapter Paul wrote of God's amazing power in this work of grace.
Ephesians 1:19-20 NAU - "and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. *These are* in accordance with the working of the strength of His might ²⁰ which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly *places*"
3. In describing the extent of God's power in Christ he adds,
Ephesians 1:21 NAU - "far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come."
4. Jesus has been exalted to the right hand of majesty where He reigns above all power and dominion and above every name that is named.
And then Paul adds an expression that embraces a theme that runs throughout the NT, "not only in this age but also in the one to come."
5. As we close out **Chapter 1** I want us to look again at the universal reign of Christ, but especially as it applies to duration.
Jesus has always reigned in sovereign dominion over all things.
 - He reigned in the countless expanse of eternity past. God has no beginning, no place of origin. He is forever God. As an inseparable part of the Godhead, Jesus has always enjoyed perfect and absolute dominion.
 - Upon the creation of the world and the beginning of time Jesus has enjoyed dominion. And at His exaltation after He accomplished our redemption upon the cross He has been raised to sit upon His throne of majesty.
 - And then there will be a final consummation of all things when all of His enemies will be destroyed and sin will be no more. Thus Jesus reigns both now and forever. Paul says,
"not only in this age but also in the one to come."

6. This morning I want to set before you what the Bible means by “this age” and what it means by “the age to come.”
This two-age motif runs throughout the New Testament. In fact, it runs throughout Scripture.
7. The word for “age” here is αἰών. It refers to a space of time. It is found 122 times in the New Testament. It is translated in various ways, sometimes “age” and sometimes “world”
Romans 12:2 NAS - "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."
A. In the plural it can simply point to the endless expanse of eternity – the ages to come. This is how Paul uses it in **Chapter 2:7**
Ephesians 2:7 NAU - "so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus."
Again in **Chapter 3**
Ephesians 3:11 NAU - "*This was* in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord"
Again in **Chapter 3**
Ephesians 3:21 NAU - "to Him *be* the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen."
B. It most commonly refers to this present period, this age, in contrast with eternity, the age to come.
8. It was a common motif of Paul.
2 Corinthians 4:3-4 NAU - "And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, ⁴ in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God."
Galatians 1:3-4 NAU - "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, ⁴ who gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father"
9. Jesus also spoke of these two ages in contrasting terms.
Mark 10:28-30 NAU - "Peter began to say to Him, "Behold, we have left everything and followed You." ²⁹ Jesus said, "Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel's sake, ³⁰ but that he will receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life."
Matthew 12:32 NAU - "Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the *age* to come."
Matthew 13:22 NAU - "And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful."

Matthew 13:36-39 NAU - "Then He left the crowds and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him and said, "Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field." ³⁷ And He said, "The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man, ³⁸ and the field is the world; and *as for* the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; and the tares are the sons of the evil *one*; ³⁹ and the enemy who sowed them is the devil, and the harvest is the end of the age; and the reapers are angels."

I. What is meant by "this age?"

A. By age we need to understand this fallen world

1. It began with the fall of Adam and the condemnation of the world. It can be defined as the history of this world from Adam to the day when Christ returns.
2. This present age is characterized by sin and corruption.
 - a. It is a God rejecting, God denying age.
It is the age where God judged the generation that built the Tower of Babel in the vain attempt to create a culture void of God.
This mind set has never ceased.
 - b. Jesus referred to this age as "a wicked and adulterous generation"
 - c. It is the same age that we are living in now
It is this age in contrast with the age to come where righteousness will reign. Paul will speak of it again at the beginning of **Chap 2 Ephesians 2:1-2 NAU** - "And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, ² in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience."
3. This present age is fallen, corrupted and condemned. It has been and always will be evil.
4. In **Romans 12** Paul admonishes us not to be conformed to it.
This age is powerful. It draws us. It can consume us. We can easily be conformed to it.
Romans 12:2 NAU - "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."
5. This age hates God and it hates those who follow God.
Ephesians 2:2 NAU - "in which you formerly walked according to the course (*αἰῶν*) of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience."
6. This age is the age of persecution for God's people
Mark 10:29-30 NAU - "Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel's sake, ³⁰ but that he will receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life."

- B. This age is under the curse of God
1. Paul referred to this age as an evil age.
Galatians 1:3-4 – “Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ, ⁴ who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us out of this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father,”
 2. Sin has brought humanity under the wrath of God. All men are under God’s just condemnation.
All men are infinitely estranged from God, separated from God.
 3. In this age all the kingdoms of the world have risen up in rebellion against God.
Psalms 2:1-3 NAU - "Why are the nations in an uproar And the peoples devising a vain thing? ² The kings of the earth take their stand And the rulers take counsel together Against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying, ³ "Let us tear their fetters apart And cast away their cords from us!"
 4. Paul is saying here that in spite of how it appears Jesus Christ is reigning with absolute power and authority
Ephesians 1:20-21 NAU - "He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly *places*, ²¹ far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come."
- C. This age will end suddenly and unexpectedly and will be followed immediately by the judgment
1. The two ages, “this age” and “the age to come” comprise all time—the time of this world’s history and the endless time of eternity. These two ages are separated by the return of Christ and the final judgment.
 2. Jesus taught that this present evil generation will end with His coming in glory.
Mark 8:38 – “For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels."
 3. The end of this present age ushers in the God Day of Judgment
Matthew 13:47-49 NAU - "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet cast into the sea, and gathering *fish* of every kind; ⁴⁸ and when it was filled, they drew it up on the beach; and they sat down and gathered the good *fish* into containers, but the bad they threw away. ⁴⁹ "So it will be at the end of the age; the angels will come forth and take out the wicked from among the righteous"
 4. All men should tremble at the nearness of this day
Romans 13:11-12 – “it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed. ¹² The night is almost gone, and the day is at hand.”
^{KJV} **Ephesians 5:16** – “Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.”

1 Thessalonians 5:4-6 – “But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day should overtake you like a thief; ⁵ for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness; ⁶ so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober.”
Titus 2:11-13 NAU - "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, ¹² instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, ¹³ looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus"

II. The Age to Come

- A. The age to come marks the beginning of eternity – the eternal reign of Christ
1. Again, it begins suddenly with the return of Christ. It isn't a gradual change.
 2. The resurrection is the passage from this age into eternity.
 3. This age is natural and temporal. The age to come is supernatural and everlasting.
- B. The age to come for God's redeemed people is characterized by the end of evil, the end of death, the end of suffering.
1. Jesus has delivered us from this present αἰών so that we might enter the age to come
Galatians 1:3-4 – “Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ, ⁴ who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us out of this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father,”
 2. The Day of Judgment will forever separate the wicked from the righteous
Matthew 25:31-33 NAU - "But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. ³² "All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; ³³ and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left."
 3. Then there will be a restoration of God's creation
2 Peter 3:13 NAU - "But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells."

III. The Already, Not Yet

- A. The reign of Christ is already inaugurated.
1. The age to come is characterized by the glorious reign of Christ. Jesus is already on His throne. He reigns in this age and in the age to come. In this sense there is an overlap in the ages.
 2. Although we await the age to come Jesus is with His people in this age
Matthew 28:20 NAU - "and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."
 3. We are already raised with Him and reigning with Him as we await the resurrection.

Ephesians 2:5-7 NAU - "even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶ and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus, ⁷ so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus."

- B. Christians are not of this present age. We are of the age to come.
1. We have already tasted of it. We have already been saved from this age and have tasted of the age to come.
Hebrews 6:4-5 NAU - "For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, ⁵ and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come"
 2. In fact, for us Christ has already ushered in this glorious new age, and yet we still await its fullness.
 3. We are citizens of the Kingdom of Christ. It is a Kingdom that is other worldly, it is heavenly, of a different age—and yet it is a Kingdom that is already present
 - a. It is the Kingdom to which all Christians belong
 - b. And while it has come, we still await its fullness
 - c. It is the “already” but also the “not yet”
 The Kingdom has come, the Kingdom will come.
 So we pray:
Matthew 6:10 – “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as *it is* in heaven.”
 4. As children of the Kingdom we are joyously awaiting its consummation. And as children of the Kingdom we are already demonstrating the righteousness of the Kingdom
2 Peter 3:13-14 NAU - "But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells. ¹⁴ Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless"

Conclusion:

What are some implications of an understanding of the distinctness of these two ages?

1. We must remain alert. This age will soon end. We must spend each moment well. We need to understand the nature of time – it is finite unpredictable, precious – each passing second is gone forever
 - a. We need to understand our duty in time - we must wisely redeem it
 - b. These days upon the earth are not days to be squandered in play.
 - c. We are accountable as stewards of all that God has given us
Our abilities, wealth, time
 - d. We must "redeem" the time - buy it up - to save it from passing forever away
wasted
Ephesians 5:16 KJV - "Redeeming the time, because the days are evil."
Romans 13:12-13 – “The night is almost gone, and the day is at hand. Let us therefore lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.
¹³ Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy.”
2. We need to understand the nature of the world around us – This is an evil world corrupted by sin. These are evil days. These are perilous times.
 - a. Satan is active in these evil days – He knows his days are numbered
 - b. Our flesh is a powerful reminder of our fallen nature
 - c. This present world continually beckons us to its ways.
3. We must continually remind ourselves of the importance of not being conformed to this age. We resist being conformed to this present evil age. Paul implied this clearly in
Romans 12
Romans 12:2 – “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”
4. Multitudes are perishing in these days. We cannot afford to close our eyes. The age to come is about to dawn. In this age alone is it possible for a person to embrace the Savior and escape the terrible condemnation of the Judgment.