

## AGAPE HOUSE OF WORSHIP

### MIDWEEK BIBLE STUDY

TOPIC: The Beginning of the End

Facilitator: Pastor Tunde Odeyemi

Main Text: Acts 2:17-21

Wednesday, October 25, 2023

#### The Spirit as Evidence of the “Presence of the Future”

**Acts 2:17-21-** *“In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. 18 Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. 19 I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. 20 The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. 21 And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’*

The visitation of God through the Spirit establishes believers as thoroughly eschatological people who live the life of the future in the present as they await the consummation. The one feature that probably more than any other distances the early church from us is the thoroughgoing eschatological perspective from which believers viewed everything that God wrought through Christ and the Spirit.

We as a church-AHOWFC, have to recapture the early church’s understanding of itself as an eschatological community.

#### Question 1. What is eschatology?

The Jewish perspective was the expectation that God through His Messiah would bring a dramatic end to the “present age.” This in turn would be followed by the “coming age,” signaled by the resurrection of the dead and the gift of the promised Holy Spirit.

A unique twist to this end time expectation conditioned the early church in every way. They believed that the fulfillment of God’s Old Testament covenant promises had begun with the work of Christ and their experience of the promised Spirit. In their view they were already living in the beginning of the end of times.

Jesus proclaimed the gospel of the Kingdom as a present reality in His ministry, although still a future event. To the early church the resurrection of Christ and the outpouring of the Spirit marked the beginning of the End, the turning of the ages. However, the End had only begun; they still awaited the final event, the (now second) coming of their Messiah Jesus, at which time they too would experience the resurrection/transformation of the body.

The early church lived “between the times”; **already** the future had begun, **not yet** had it been completely fulfilled. This already/not yet perspective, in which they believed themselves already to be living in the time of the End, even though it was yet to be consummated, is the eschatological framework that determines everything about them- how they lived, how they thought, and how they understood their own place in the present world, which was now understood to be on its way out!

## **End Time Perspective of the Epistles- the Already but Not Yet of the Present Age**

**1 Corinthians 10:11-** 11 Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

Christ's death and resurrection have already passed sentence on the present age (**2 Corinthians 5:14-15**), which is thus "passing away" (1 Corinthians 7:31). The new order of things has begun. It is no longer an option to view things from the perspective of the "flesh," that is, from the "old order"/worldly/present age point of view (**2 Corinthians 5:16-17**). The death and resurrection of Christ and the gift of the Spirit mean both death to the old and a radical, newly constituted life in the present.

Our salvation is a fundamental eschatological reality. God's final salvation of his people has already been accomplished by Christ. The future condemnation we all deserve has been transferred from the future into the past, having been borne by Christ (**Romans 8:1-3**). Thus we "have been saved" (**Ephesians 2:8**). Since our final salvation has not yet been fully realized, we can speak of salvation as something presently in process ("we are being saved," **1 Corinthians 1:18**) and as yet to be completed ("we shall be saved," **Romans 5:9**)

Redemption is both "already" (**Ephesians 1:7**) and "not yet" (**Ephesians 4:30**), as is our Adoption (**Romans 8:15 and 23**) and Justification (= gift of righteousness; **Romans 5:1 and Galatians 5:5**)

**Question 2:** Give another example in the New Testament of the "already" and "not yet"

The church is an end-time community, whose members live in the present as those stamped with eternity. We live as foreigners/immigrants on earth; our true citizenship is in heaven (**Philippians 3:20**). Ethical life, therefore, does not consist of rules to live by. Rather, empowered by the Spirit, we now live the life of the future in the present age, the life that characterizes God Himself. This is why Paul appeals to end-time realities as the reason believers may not resolve present grievances before pagan courts (**1 Corinthians 6:1-4**).

### **The Spirit as the Evidence and Guarantee of the Future**

The Spirit as Down Payment- 2 Corinthians 1:21-22; 5:4-5; Ephesians 1:14

The Spirit as First fruits- Romans 8:23. The first sheaf of grain is God's pledge to us of the final harvest.

The Spirit as Seal- Ephesians 4:30; 1:13; 2 Corinthians 1:21-22.