

THE ‘NOW’ AND ‘NOT YET’

“But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.” —ROMANS 8:24-25

It is important we understand and hold in right balance what we may call the ‘now’ and the ‘not yet’ aspects of Christian experience. The kingdom of God has both a present and a future dimension, and we must be careful not to confuse what is promised for the future as being for the present, or not enjoying what is in the present because we have delayed it to the future. There are five areas of the Christian experience we can identify, which have the present ‘now’ and the future ‘not yet’ experience. These are intellectual, moral, social, physical and spiritual. The first three will be addressed today, and the latter two tomorrow.

Intellectually, God has revealed Himself in creation, in conscience, in scripture and in Christ. Paul writes, “For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities - his eternal power and divine nature - have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made so that people are without excuse” (Romans 1:20). God has revealed enough of what we need to know so that we do not have to flounder in darkness. There are things of God we do not know, which may be revealed in the ‘not yet’, but we would do well to have more confidence in what God has revealed, and more humility in what He has not yet revealed.

In the area of morality, we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and Christ-likeness is growing within us. As Paul tells us, “we are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory” (2 Corinthians 3:18). The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. These are wonderful qualities being produced in us and are the ‘now’, but the ‘not yet’ aspect of our fallen nature, is yet to be eradicated. It will not come to completion in this life, but in the ‘not yet’, we will be fully conformed to the likeness of Christ.

The third area is socially. In society and our relationships with others, we are declared by Jesus to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. We are to care, to love, to give. This is the ‘now’, but we can have confidence in the ‘not yet’. Revelation 11:15 says, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and He will reign for ever and ever.” Micah 4:3 tells us, “Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.” In the ‘not yet’, there will be everlasting peace, and we can know this with certainty.

PRAYER: Dear Lord, thank you for revealing enough of yourself so that we have hope and confidence in our future. Amen.

TO REFLECT UPON: Do I sometimes expect future promises of the Bible to be happening now?