

A Look at 'Time Past' and 'But Now'

For many years, I have drawn charts under the headings of
Time Past But Now and The Ages to Come, based on Paul's writings:

Eph 2:11-13 Wherefore remember, that ye being **in time past** Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands;

12 That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:

13 **But now** in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

(The 'ages to come' phrase is in **Eph 2:7.**)

I classified particular books of the Bible under each of the 3 headings. However, I assigned a particular verse in Peter's 1st epistle solely to the 'ages to come' even though it had both 'time past' and 'but now'. So let's consider Peter's use of the same phrases, and examine its context:

1 Pet 2:10 Which **in time past** were not a people, **but** *are ('are' is in italics)* **now** (*'but now' here is the same as 'but now' in the next phrase*) the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, **but now** have obtained mercy.

Rather than automatically placing **1 Peter 2:10** in 'ages to come' with the 'time past' and 'but now' statements let's compare it with Paul's writings. Peter called believers **babes**, but wished they would **grow up**:

1 Pet 2:1-3 Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings,

2 As **newborn babes**, desire the sincere milk of the word, **that ye may grow thereby**:

3 If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

2 Pet 3:18 But **grow in grace**, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.

Paul scolded the Jews and gave them warning because they knew God's law and felt qualified to **teach babes**. They boasted of their favored status with God, but lost it because of their unbelief and God replaced them with Gentiles, who were thankful to get in God's family:

Rom 2:17-29 Behold, thou art called a Jew,
and retest in the law,
and makest thy boast of God,

18 And knowest his will,
and approvest the things that are more excellent,
being instructed out of the law;

19 And art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind,
a light of them which are in darkness,

20 An instructor of the foolish,
a teacher of babes,

which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law.

21 Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?
thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal?

22 Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery,
dost thou commit adultery?

thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?

23 Thou that makest thy boast of the law,
through breaking the law dishonourest thou God?

24 For **the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written.** (2 Sam 12:14 is an example of a serious offense)

25 For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, **thy circumcision is made uncircumcision.**

26 **Therefore if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision?**

27 And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law?

God offered salvation to Gentiles, making a true Jew of anyone who believed:

28 For he is **not a Jew**, which is one **outwardly**;

neither is that **circumcision**, which is **outward in the flesh**:

29 But **he is a Jew**, which is one **inwardly**;

and circumcision is that **of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter**;
whose praise is **not of men, but of God**.

Paul referred to the carnal saints at Corinth as **babes** (1 Pet 2:2) on milk.

He blamed them for arguing about which man led them to the Lord. 'Grace'

believers should realize that the Corinthians were taught that, **regardless**

of WHO preached to them, God had made all believers be 'one':

1 Cor 3:1-8 And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto **babes** in Christ.

2 I have fed you with **milk**, and not with **meat**: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able.

3 For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? (**not in the Spirit**)

4 For while one saith, I am of Paul;

and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?

5 Who then is Paul,

and who is Apollos,

but **ministers** by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?

6 I have planted,

Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.

7 So then neither is he that planteth any thing,

neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.

8 Now **he that planteth and he that watereth are one:**

and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour.

One think of it:

- **Paul, one with Apollos**

- **all the Corinthians 'one' with each other --**

whether they believed through Paul's ministry -- or through Apollos' ministry (who knew only the baptism of John, until Aquila and Priscilla taught him more - **Acts 18:25-26**)

- **one bread**

- **one body** (which we will look at next).

Speaking of communion, showing all believers being **united as 'one'**

in the **New Testament of Christ's blood** (Heb 9:15-17), Paul wrote:

1 Cor 10:17 For we being many are **one bread, and one body:**

for **we are all partakers** of that **one bread**. (ref **John 8:35,48,51**)

Let's go back now to **1 Pet 2:10**'s context and keep going through it:

1 Pet 2:4-5 To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious,

5 **Ye** also, **as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house**, an holy priesthood, to **offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God** by Jesus Christ.

Both Peter and Paul describe believers as a dwelling place of God.

Peter said ye are 'built up a spiritual house'

Paul wrote ye are 'God's building':

1 Cor 3:9 For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, **ye are God's building**.

Paul said ye are 'God's temple':

2 Cor 6:16 And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for **ye are the temple of the living God**; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Both men (Peter and Paul) used different words, but the same conclusion.

Peter said 'to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God'

Paul wrote to be a living sacrifice, acceptable to God:

Rom 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that **ye present your bodies a living sacrifice**, holy, **acceptable unto God**, which is your reasonable service.

Peter showed that Jesus was the chief corner stone

1 Pet 2:6 Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion **a chief corner stone**, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.

Paul wrote of the household of God and that Jesus is the chief corner stone:

Eph 2:19-22 Now therefore **ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God**;

(Eph 2:)20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, **Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;** Page 5
21 In whom **all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord:**

22 In whom ye also are **builed together for an habitation of God** through the Spirit.

Back to **1 Pet 2** for more context of time past and but now, where Peter compared believers to unbelieving Israel, who received not Christ:

1 Pet 2:7-8 Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but **unto them which be disobedient, <apeitheo> (not to allow one's self to be persuaded or comply with)** the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made **the head of the corner,**

8 And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, **being disobedient: <apeitheo>** whereunto also they were appointed.

Paul showed through Isaiah's prophecy, how God would visit the Gentiles ... then he contrasted their thankfulness with Israel's refusal:

Rom 10:20-21 But Esaias is very bold, and saith,

I was found of them that sought me not;

I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me.

21 **But to Israel he saith,** All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto **a disobedient <apeitheo>** and gainsaying people.

Even being God's people, Israel was repeatedly disobedient to Him.

But just as belief is not now limited to Israel disobedience is not either.

Anybody, whether Jews or Gentiles can either believe or disobey God:

Rom 2:8 But **unto them** that are contentious, (also translated 'strife') and **do not obey <apeitheo>** the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath,

When Jesus comes with His holy angels, unbelievers will be punished:

2 Thess 1:8 In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that **know not** God, and that **obey not the gospel** of our Lord Jesus Christ:

The Greek word <apeitheo> is used 16 times in scripture,

and was translated

- believe not - 8 times
- obey not - 3 times
- unbelieving - 1 time
- disobedient - 4 times.

Peter warned of judgment for unbelievers who do not obey God's gospel:

1 Pet 4:17 For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end

be of them that obey not <apeitheo> the gospel of God?

Notice that Paul was separated unto **the gospel of God** and that it was **the same gospel** that we just read about in **1 Pet 4:17**:

Rom 1:1-5 Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated **unto the gospel of God**,

Next, notice that **the gospel of God** was in 'time past' in prophecy:

2 (Which he had **promised afore by his prophets** in the holy scriptures,)

What was the gospel of God about? It had information

- that Jesus Christ was God's Son,
- that He was of King David's lineage,
- that He was dead and resurrected:

3 Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord,
which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh;

4 And declared to be the Son of God with power,
according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead:

Paul was "separated unto the gospel of God" (Rom 1:1, 15:16; 2 Cor 11:7; 1 Thess 2:2, 2:8, 2:9)

- that he also calls "my gospel" (Rom 2:16, 16:25; 2 Tim 2:8)
- that he calls "the gospel of Christ" (Rom 1:16, 15:19, 15:29; 1 Cor 9:12, 9:18; 2 Cor 9:13, 10:14; Gal 1:7; Phil 1:27; 1 Thess 3:2)
- that he calls "the glorious gospel of Christ" (2 Cor 4:4)

- that he calls “the gospel of His Son” (Rom 1:9)
- that he calls “the gospel of peace” (Rom 10:15 - quoting Isa 52:7; Eph 6:15)
- that he calls “that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles” (Gal 2:2)
 - that he calls “the gospel of the uncircumcision” (Gal 2:7)
 - that he calls “the gospel of your salvation” (Eph 1:13)
 - that he calls “the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thes 1:8)
 - that he calls “the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust” (1 Tim 1:11).
 - that he calls “the gospel” numerous of times.

Clearly, the gospel that Paul was separated unto was the gospel that was in prophecy. The gospel of God concerning Jesus Christ was not a ‘mystery’ revelation. It was not a unique, special gospel given only to Paul.

Paul **began** Romans **with the same phrase** as he **ended** Romans.

Look at **Rom 1:5** and get **Rom 16:26** and we’ll see **the same purpose**.

(We’re still in Rom 1):5 By whom we have received grace and apostleship, **for obedience to the faith among all nations**, for his name:

The point is What does faith do? Faith obeys:

Rom 16:25-26 Now to him that is of power to **stablish** you according to

- **my gospel**,
 - and the preaching of Jesus Christ,
according to the revelation of the mystery,
which was kept secret since the world began,
- 26 But now is made manifest, (detailed in Eph 3:1-7, Col 1:25-27)
- **and by the scriptures of the prophets**, (plural, not just Paul’s)
according to the commandment of the everlasting God,
made known **to all nations for the obedience of faith**:

Paul's commission was about taking the message of salvation by grace without works, to all nations that their faith would produce good works.

Salvation is not and never was obtained by works:

Rom 4:2-6 For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God.

3 For what saith the scripture? **Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.**

4 Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.

5 But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

6 Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works,

Salvation is and always has been a gift of God's grace:

Eph 2:8-10 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.

10 For we are his workmanship,

created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

Paul showed how belief (faith) and obedience (works) are linked together:

Rom 6:16-17 Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?

17 But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.

James also illustrated belief (faith) and obedience (works) as inseparable:

James 2:14-26 What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? (There is no profit in one saying they have faith, but they don't have works.) can faith save him? (Saving faith works.)

15 If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food,
 16 And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? *(It won't profit, if you don't give them warmth or food then they will still be cold and hungry.)*

17 Even so **faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.**

18 Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works:
 shew me thy faith without thy works, *(Well, we know that we cannot see faith. Faith is the evidence of things not seen - Heb 11:1.)*

and **I will shew thee my faith by my works.** *(Thus, the only way to display faith to prove it to see it to show it is by works.)*

19 Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well:
 the devils also believe, and tremble.

20 But wilt thou know, O vain man, that **faith without works is dead?** *(Abraham's faith was tested by physical death, when God told him to kill Isaac. Abraham believed that God would raise Isaac in order to fulfill His promises - Heb 11:17-19. Abraham's faith worked. His faith was proved by his works. He obeyed what God told him to do):*

21 Was not **Abraham our father justified by works,**
when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?

22 Seest thou how **faith wrought with his works,**
 and **by works was faith made perfect?**

(Abraham was justified by faith when he believed God. Abraham was counted as 'righteous' then. James agrees with Paul in Rom 4:3):

23 And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, **Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness:** and he was called the Friend of God.

(Abraham's faith was shown by his works. He was willing to sacrifice his son. Faith is not visible, except by works):

24 Ye see then how that **by works a man is justified,**
 and not by faith only.

(Rahab was another example, who believed the spies, then helped them):

25 Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot **justified by works,** when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?

26 For as the body without the spirit is dead,
 so **faith without works is dead** also.

The point is that by faith, Abraham obeyed. His faith produced works:

Heb 11:8 By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, **obeyed;** and he went out, not knowing whither he went.

The Bible equates obeying the gospel with believing the gospel

because when a person has faith that faith produces works:

Rom 10:16 But they have not all **obeyed the gospel**.

For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath **believed** our report?

We have the **whole** of scripture we have a **complete** Bible to fully equip us first, to believe and then, to show our belief by works:

2 Tim 3:16-17 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

17 That the man of God may be perfect, **thoroughly furnished unto all good works**.

If we say one thing and do another, then we deceive ourselves:

Titus 1:16 They profess that they know God;

but in works they deny him, being abominable, and **disobedient**, and **unto every good work reprobate**.

'Reprobate' means 'not standing the test not being validated being castaway rejected unfit.' It is not simply 'search your heart':

2 Cor 13:5-6 Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?

6 But I trust that ye shall know that we are not reprobates.

God's purpose for those He saved by grace is to show it, by good works:

Titus 2:11-14 For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,

12 Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;

13 Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;

14 Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

Paul and Peter wrote that God designed His saints to be a peculiar people:

1 Pet 2:9-12 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, **<ethnos>** (same Greek word as Gentiles in vs. 12) a peculiar people; (**Exo 19:5,6; Deut 14:2**) that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath **called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:**

10 Which **in time past** were not a people, **but** are **now** the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, **but now** have **obtained mercy.**

11 Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers (**1 Pet 1:1**) and pilgrims, **abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;**

12 Having your conversation honest among **the Gentiles: <ethnos>** that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day **of visitation.**

<episkope> (same Greek word also translated 'bishop' - also **1 Pet 2:25**)

Paul and Peter taught that God moved saints out of darkness and into light:

Col 1:12-13 Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath **made us meet (fit or able) to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:**

13 Who hath **delivered us from the power of darkness,** and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:

As in **Rom 9:25-30**, Paul 'now' includes the Gentiles in God's mercy:

Rom 11:30-31 For as ye **in times past** have not believed God, **yet** have **now** ('yet' 'now' are the same Greek words that are translated 'but now') **obtained mercy** through their unbelief:

31 Even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may **obtain mercy.**

As Paul reminded Titus I will remind us, over and over:

Titus 3:8 This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou **affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works.**

These things are good and profitable unto men.

We have assurance by God's Spirit that we are God's children (**Rom 8:16**)
.... **when our faith works!**

This is David Dowell, saying, "Think about it!"

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