

119

MINISTRIES

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The Age to Come: How to Time Travel to the Future

Is it possible for believers to time travel to the future? According to Scripture, there is an “age to come,” where believers will experience many wonderful things. But is there a way to access some of these future promises in the *present age*?

According to the New Testament, the Holy Spirit allows us to experience some of these future promises. We could perhaps think of the Spirit as a “time machine” that transports things from the future into the present.

In this teaching, we will explore some ways that believers, through the Spirit, live in the future today.

“Is This the Time?”

Prior to his ascension, Jesus—or Yeshua, as he is called in Hebrew—gave his disciples some instructions. He told them to wait in Jerusalem until the Father fulfilled his promise to baptize them with the Holy Spirit:

Acts 1:4-5

And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, “you heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”

This instruction from Yeshua prompted a question from his disciples: was now the time that he would restore the kingdom to Israel?

Acts 1:6

So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?”

Why did the disciples ask Yeshua if he was going to restore the kingdom to Israel at that time? The reason is that they knew the Scriptures. According to the Prophets, the outpouring of God’s Spirit is

connected to the establishment of the eschatological kingdom—the “age to come.”

For example, Ezekiel speaks of a time when Israel will repent and be restored to the land (Ezekiel 36:28-32). On this same day, God will make the land like the garden of Eden, and the nations will come to know YHWH (Ezekiel 36:33-36). Ezekiel goes on to prophesy that the two houses of Israel will be restored as one nation (Ezekiel 37:1-23), and the Messiah will rule over them forever (Ezekiel 37:24-25), and God’s sanctuary will be among them (Ezekiel 37:26-28). In the midst of all these prophecies about the coming kingdom, Ezekiel speaks of the Spirit indwelling God’s people:

Ezekiel 36:26-28

And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. **And I will put my Spirit within you**, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God.

So, the prophecy about the coming Spirit is connected with these other prophecies about the age to come. God will put his Spirit within his people, which results in his people being transformed from the inside out. They are given a new heart and are enabled to follow God’s laws.

The prophet Joel also speaks about the Spirit. In the midst of prophecies about the coming “Day of YHWH,” Joel says that God will restore Israel and bring about an era of peace and prosperity (Joel 2:18-27; 3:17-21). Additionally, Joel says this:

Joel 2:28-29

And it shall come to pass afterward, that **I will pour out my Spirit** on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even on the male and female servants in those days **I will pour out my Spirit**.

So, both Ezekiel and Joel mention the promised Spirit within the broader context of God restoring Israel’s kingdom. Hence, the disciples’ question to Yeshua was perfectly reasonable. If the Spirit is about to be poured out, that must mean that the age to come has arrived.

However, Yeshua responds to his disciples’ question by telling them not to be concerned about the timing of the kingdom’s restoration and instead concentrate on their mission as witnesses:

Acts 1:6-8

So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

Here, we should recognize that Yeshua does not reject the reality of the kingdom’s eventual restoration. He simply says to his disciples that it is not for them to know the timing. After this, Yeshua ascends, and two men appear and inform the disciples that Yeshua will eventually return (Acts 1:10-11). Later in Acts, Peter connects Israel’s restoration with the future Second Coming of the Messiah:

Acts 3:19-21

Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may

come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus [Yeshua], whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago.

So, the Book of Acts presents us with a type of tension. The promised Spirit is already here, but the fullness of what God has promised his people is “not yet.” The age to come, in some sense, has entered the present age, but also has not yet fully arrived.

Because of the Prophets’ association of the Spirit with the age to come, the New Testament authors perceived the outpouring of the Spirit as proof that the age to come had, in some sense, entered the present age. The author of Hebrews speaks about how the present age is “still standing” (Hebrews 9:8-9), and yet he also says that those who have “shared in the Holy Spirit” have tasted “the powers of the age to come” (Hebrews 6:4-5). In other words, through the Spirit, the believer experiences the powers of the age to come, which are released into the present age. *The Spirit enables us to time travel.*

The New Testament authors recognized that the Spirit brings the future into the present. This is why they speak both of a salvation that is to come (1 Peter 1:3-5; Hebrews 9:28), and a salvation right now (Ephesians 2:8; 2 Timothy 1:8-10). There is a resurrection yet to come (1 Corinthians 15:12-48), but we are also considered to be resurrected or reborn beings right now (Romans 6:4). There is a great harvest yet to come (Matthew 13:36-43), but we are considered a kind of firstfruits of the harvest right now (James 1:18). The fullness of God’s kingdom is in the future, but through the Spirit, we get to experience a part of it in the present.

Let’s explore some ways that believers, through the Spirit, experience the future in the present.

Internal Transformation

As we mentioned earlier, one of the promises associated with the Holy Spirit is found in Ezekiel 36:25-27. This prophecy states that, in the age to come, God will give his people a new heart, put his Spirit within them, and cause them to be obedient to his commandments. This prophecy is reminiscent of Jeremiah’s prophecy of the New Covenant, where God’s people would be transformed internally. God will write his Torah upon their hearts:

Jeremiah 31:33

For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD [YHWH]: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

When Ezekiel and Jeremiah gave these prophecies, they were looking ahead to the age to come. However, the apostle Paul saw this prophecy as being partially fulfilled in his own time. In Romans 7, Paul laments the fallen condition of sinful humans. He speaks about the frustrating struggle—the “war”—between his mind’s desire to obey God’s Law and his flesh’s desire to sin (Romans 7:15, 22-23). His frustration compels him to cry out...

Romans 7:24

Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?

Paul then goes on to answer his own question in the next chapter of Romans. He writes that the “Spirit

of life” frees believers from “the law of sin and death” (Romans 8:2). That is, the Spirit frees us from the consequence of sin, which is death. After this, Paul goes on to say that the Spirit empowers believers to fulfill the Torah’s righteous requirements, overcoming the flesh’s desire to sin:

Romans 8:3-4

For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

So, from Paul’s perspective, through the Spirit, believers have access to the internal transformation promised to them in the age to come. Believers will not be perfect in the present age (cf. 1 John 2:1), but through the Spirit, they can experience victory over sin and be gradually transformed as they walk according to the Spirit. Paul still looks forward to the age to come in the future (Romans 8:18-30), but he nevertheless recognizes that believers have access to these promises of the age to come right now.

Healing Power

Throughout the Book of Acts, the apostles were empowered to perform miracles. This is what Yeshua said would happen as they carry out the Great Commission:

Mark 16:15-18

And he said to them, “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up serpents with their hands; and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover.”

After the Spirit descended upon the disciples and empowered them to be the Messiah’s witnesses (Acts 1:8), they healed many people in accordance with Yeshua’s promise, even bringing the dead back to life in some instances (Acts 3:1-11; 5:12-16; 9:33-34, 36-41; 14:8-10; 19:11-12; 20:9-12; 28:7-9).

These miracles of the sick being healed and the dead coming back to life point to the age to come when pain and death will no longer exist (Revelation 21:4). These miracles were examples of the age to come invading the present age. Yeshua said that these signs would “accompany those who believe” (Mark 16:17). Thus, all those who believe and receive the Holy Spirit in the present age have access to the healing power of the age to come. The manifestation of such miracles—the release of the age to come into the present age—ought to be expected as the Church continues to carry out the Great Commission.

Obviously, this does not mean that every prayer for healing will be answered to our satisfaction. Still, believers can expect to see and experience miracles as they walk according to the Spirit. This is yet another way that the Spirit brings the promises of the future age into the present age.

Unity

Another way that believers experience the future age in the present age is by having unity in the Spirit

with other believers. As Paul writes:

1 Corinthians 12:12-13

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

The members of the Messiah's body are diverse. You have "Jews or Greeks, slaves or free." And yet, all are united in the Spirit. Similarly, in the age to come, believers from every nation and language will worship God in unity:

Revelation 7:9-10

After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, **from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages**, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"

For Paul, the promise of a multicultural body of believers in the age to come was being fulfilled in his own time. Through the Spirit, the word has gone forth from Jerusalem, and all the nations were coming to the Lord and learning his ways, just as the prophets said would happen in the age to come (Isaiah 2:1-5; Micah 4:1-4). When believers, regardless of cultural or linguistic distinctions, join in worship and service to the Lord, it signifies the release of the age to come into the present age. Through the Spirit, every tribe and language and people and nation worships God in unity and love.

Unrestricted Worship

Another way that believers experience the future age in the present age is by being unrestricted in their worship. In the age to come, believers will not be able to resist worshipping the Lord. All the suffering associated with the present age will be gone, and God's presence will dwell among his people in fullness:

Revelation 21:3

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.

However, in the present age, sometimes it is difficult to want to worship the Lord because of suffering. The trials of the present age can feel overwhelming, and we feel too weak to even pray. Nevertheless, Paul assures believers who are struggling with the conditions of the fallen, present age, that the Spirit helps them in their weakness and intercedes for them:

Romans 8:26-28

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

Through the Spirit, we can "time travel" to the age to come, where God's presence is intensely felt, and

we are freed to offer unrestricted praise to him despite our suffering in the present age. The Spirit enables us to experience God's presence in a deep and profound way, even in the midst of our fallen world as we await the age to come.

This is a wonderful gift! In our present age, we endure suffering due to sin and death, and we all yearn for that future time of glory when God will restore all things. The beautiful thing is that we don't have to wait until that future time to begin experiencing this restoration. Through the Spirit, we can catch a glimpse of that future kingdom and enjoy a fraction of God's goodness right now. This experience fills us with hope and assures us that full restoration is indeed real, and God will bring it into being in his timing. In the meantime, the Spirit offers us a form of time travel, allowing us to experience part of God's kingdom firsthand, giving us confidence that its fullness is on the way.

Conclusion

In this teaching, we explored how the Bible's promises regarding the age to come can be experienced in the present age. The New Testament affirms that, through the Spirit, believers have access to elements of the age to come as they experience internal transformation, manifestations of healing in their midst, unity with other believers despite cultural distinctions, and unrestricted worship. The Spirit serves as a "time machine," transporting the future age to the present. Although these promises won't reach their complete fulfillment until the future, the Spirit provides us with a glimpse of the glorious age to come right now.

We pray you have been blessed by this teaching. Remember, continue to test everything. Shalom! For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at www.testeverything.net

Shalom, and may Yahweh bless you in walking in the whole Word of God.

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