

NOW—NOT YET

One of the more profound mysteries of God's economy for man is stated succinctly in just three words: "Now—not yet." This phrase describes what might be termed God's plan of *delayed fruition*. One example of this from the Old Testament is the anointing of David as King of Israel. As a youth he was anointed by the prophet Samuel; at that moment he was, in fact, king. Yet Saul remained in that office and David did not ascend to the throne until Saul's death—about 15 years later. And even with that, for the next seven years his rule was limited to the house of Judah, in Hebron, and only after that was he effectively king over all of Israel. At his anointing, David *was* king—but also not yet.

Satan's status in relation to this world and the people of Christ also fits into this category. In Genesis we have the prophecy that the Messiah would "crush" his head.

"And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."

Genesis 3:15 NIV

Christ came in the flesh to fulfill this prophecy on the cross.

Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.

Hebrews 2:14-15

At the cross, Christ rendered Satan *positionally* powerless against those who would believe in His name. That great nemesis would not and could not ever gain the victory over those souls. And that is the "now."

But there is also a "not yet," as any

believer can attest. Just as we remain in the flesh, and remain encumbered by it, we know that Satan remains a force with which to reckon in our lives. The devil can still sling his arrows at us, and they often find purchase in our lives.

We take comfort, however, that the "not yet" will have its moment of fruition. God is faithful, and His word is true.

And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

Revelation 20:10

Believers will have their eternal life with Jesus; Satan will have his eternal life in the torment of his own hell.



Perhaps the most personal, most important instance of "Now—not yet" is the believer's sanctification. At the moment we receive Christ, the moment we receive the Holy Spirit, we are sanctified: We are permanently set apart; we are made holy. We are consecrated to Christ.

Nevertheless, every believer can attest to feeling anything but holy on most days. So are we sanctified or not sanctified? Answer: Yes. At the moment of conversion we are, indeed, sanctified—*positionally*.

But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, so that, just as it is written, "Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord."

1 Corinthians 1:30-31

That is the "now." But beyond that initial moment, sanctification is also progressive; more than just a one-time event, sanctification is an ongoing *process* in the healthy life of a believer.

As we grow and mature in Christ during our earthly years with Him, we also become progressively more sanctified—more like our Savior and Lord. This is the "not now." Perhaps a parable will help illuminate this mystery.

You have a horrible, life-threatening disease. The doctor administers an injection of a life-saving serum. The next day, even the following week you feel just as bad as before, suffering the same debilitating symptoms of the disease. You call the doctor and complain that nothing has changed. He assures you that everything is proceeding just fine; the serum just takes a long time to do its work. He says, "The serum is working. You are healed and will not die. But it will take a long time before the symptoms are gone for good."



It takes no more time than the blink of an eye to become *positionally* sanctified. It takes a lifetime to become truly holy, like Christ.

