

"This Age" and the "Coming Age"

Jesus spoke of this world and that world. It is written in Luke 20:34-35. *"This world"* is the present time when all the activities of mortal life dominate the scene -- *"that world"* is the world to come when Jesus returns to rule the earth in righteousness, assisted by his faithful servants, raised to life at this coming and made immortal like himself. This much is revealed in 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10; 2 Peter 3:13; 1 Corinthians 15:22-23,50-57; 1 John 3:2; Matthew 19:27-28; Revelation 4:9.

It is plain therefore when it is written in Hebrews 6:5 that some have tasted of the *"powers of the world to come"* that it is talking about the holy spirit. If there was a doubt, verse 4 spells it out.

When that power is exercised directly by God wonderful things happen. To name just two that concern us so much; Jesus was conceived by the holy spirit (Luke 1:35). and the scriptures were written by men moved by the holy spirit (2 Peter 1:21).

Jesus Christ was given the holy spirit without measure by God and he used it wisely to perform miracles (Matthew 11:4-5). In Jesus' case the preaching of the Gospel must be counted as a work of the holy spirit since he also was a holy one moved by the holy spirit to *"bring to light life and immortality"* 2 Timothy 1:10. and the doctrine he taught was not his own but from his Father (John 7:16).

Many of the first century disciples received the holy spirit and it was mostly used wisely and then amazing things happened. Acts 2:4. But sometimes they used it for display and created confusion. 1 Corinthians 14:26-33.

A Deposit Guaranteeing our Inheritance

Paul call this possession of the holy spirit *"a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance"* Ephesians 1:13-14. It was a guarantee of something to be received at a later date. The later date is the resurrection when natural bodies are raised as spiritual bodies 1 Corinthians 15:44. Jesus said that to enter the kingdom of God a man must be born of water (baptism) and the spirit (raised at the resurrection to a spiritual body). This being born of the spirit, a spiritual body is the adoption for which the faithful groan and wait. Even those who had *"a deposit guaranteeing their inheritance"*, or *"the firstfruits of the Spirit"*, groaned. (Romans 8:23).

The important point is to realize that in the day of our Lord's return when the faithful are given immortality and the powers of *"that world"* are possessed fully it will be all joy and gladness because it will be our nature as immortals to always use that power at the command of God and to his glory. Psalm 16:11 captures the picture. But, as possessed by the disciples of the first century, it was a mixed blessing sometimes entailing problems and responsibilities not easy to carry. It did not itself confer moral strength or a more righteous character. The classic

example of this is the case of the Lord Jesus Christ himself when tempted in the wilderness.

Temptation

Fresh from his baptism and receiving the holy spirit accompanied by public approval by his Father, he is led by the same spirit into the wilderness to be tempted and it is the newly acquired power to turn stones into bread that constitutes the first temptation. The strength to meet this temptation must come from God (as every good and perfect gift does) but not by the possessing of a miracle working power. The help this time comes from something God did by the holy spirit years before Jesus was born. By the spirit God moved men to write the Bible. God's word. The written word. Over the years of his growing up Jesus had eagerly and ceaselessly soaked up that word and now he had that moral strength and righteous character that comes from it. Here was the strength to overcome the temptation... This was the character of God and Jesus had taken it on so that it was his character. To what extent we recognize this character in Christ and make it our own, to that extent we benefit from the same power by which he overcame every temptation. Jesus referred to it as spirit when he rebuked James and John for their militant attitude ... In Romans 8:9 Paul acknowledges both the source of the character of God and Jesus as our example. A man may or may not have been given a taste of the powers of the world to come, but what he must have, to be accepted by Jesus Christ in the day of judgement is that character of which Jesus himself is the perfect example.

The Spirit of Today

Our time has seen men and women struggling to obtain, claiming to have, fighting over, giving contradictory accounts of, making false claims for and generally bringing into disrepute the holy spirit, while seeming not to know or realize that it would not help them to enter the kingdom of God if they had it. And all the time the energy this used is taking away from reading and studying the written word.

Jesus said:

The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life.

John 6:63, NIV

There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; that very word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day.

John 12:48, NIV

"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.

Matthew 7:24-25, NIV

Do we know what kind of spirit we are of? (Luke 9:55) On that will depend our acceptance at the hand of Jesus when he sits to judge. To be accepted depends on our being born of the holy spirit -- not a foretaste, not the guarantee, not the firstfruits, but the gift in full, to be exercised in joy and gladness in the beauty of holiness to the glory of God.