

The Already and the Not Yet (Part II)
1 Corinthians 1:4-7 and 1 John 2:8
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Introduction

This morning we are going to be continuing the discussion we began last week regarding the already/not yet tension of our lives as Christians. Last week I set out to answer one question (stated in two ways);

“In what sense can our salvation be both present and future? To what degree and in what way is our future salvation realized in the present?”

The fact is that the Christian life has an entirely future oriented stance. Our hope is still yet a future reality. This is why Christianity is spoken of in terms of faith and hope.¹ I have already labored to prove from the Scriptures the forward-looking nature of the Christian life. This, of course, brings up many questions about the nature of our faith. To what degree and in what way is our future salvation realized in the present? We know that the salvation won for us by God through His Son is something that we presently enjoy. But how much of our future salvation is realized in the present?

Theologians have answered this question by speaking of the already/not yet tension. In other words, they suggest that the blessings of the cross are *already* being poured out on the people of God and yet they are *not yet* being poured out in the fullest sense of the word, and will not be until the second coming of Jesus. We are caught between the already and the not yet. Jesus has died and risen from the grave, securing our salvation, the Spirit has been given that this salvation might be enjoyed by the people of God, but our final salvation will not take place until Jesus comes back to usher in His kingdom. *In other words, although the blessings of the age to come are already being realized in our present age, they are not yet being realized in their fullest, consummate form.*

Last week we looked at how the already/not yet tension radically shapes our view of our personal salvation. We saw that there is an already/not yet aspect to our salvation, redemption, adoption, freedom from sin, heavenly dwelling, and even eternal life. This morning we will be continuing our discussion regarding this already/not yet tension, but we will be looking at it with a different lens. Instead of looking at how this perspective radically shapes and informs our present personal salvation we will looking at how this perspective radically shapes and informs our understanding of God’s Kingdom.

I know that I have already shared many of the truths with you that I will be sharing this morning; however I think it will be helpful to review them with the purpose of seeing how they contribute to this overarching already/not yet emphasis in the Scriptures. This is necessary because the already/not yet emphasis is no mere passing thought in the mind of God. This is what fundamentally characterizes the age in which we live. In other words, this is a foundational worldview for the Christian. There are certain doctrines (teachings) in the bible which are important and yet not foundational, such as limited atonement or the mode of baptism. Although it is important that a believer acquire a biblical view of the scope of the atonement (that is, whether one has an Arminian, Ameraldian, or Calvinistic view of the atonement), where a

¹ See Romans 8:18-25 and Hebrews 11:1 for a biblical understanding of the future-oriented nature of ‘hope’ and ‘faith.’

believer actually falls on these sorts of issues will not greatly affect their overall view of biblical doctrine. Other doctrines, on the other hand, are extremely foundational, affecting (to at least one degree or another) a believer's understanding of almost every other doctrine in the bible.

I run the risk of redundancy by doing what I am doing this morning, but it is important that you see that this already/not yet tension pervades the entire New Testament. This perspective is not something that shows up here and there. The already/not yet tension is the characteristic shape of our lives as Christians on this earth. My hope this morning is that this doctrine find a large place in your understanding of God's Kingdom, His cosmic mission, and in your understanding of the Christian life.

1 John 2:8

Before surveying the biblical field for evidence of the already/not yet tension in regard to God's Kingdom, I want to draw your attention to 1 John 2:8. This passage so very clearly communicates the already/not yet aspect of God's present day activity in the world in a few short words. Take a look at it with me.

Yet I am writing a new command, which is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining.

Notice how John characterizes the shape of God's redemptive activity for this present age. There are two foundation realities to God's Kingdom in our present age: 1. "the darkness is passing away" and 2. "the true light is already shining." First of all, the darkness is 'passing away'. John does not say that the darkness has passed away or that it will pass away. He speaks of it as a process. The darkness is in the process of passing away. It has not passed away in the fullest sense of the word, and yet it is being pushed out. The age of this world is already being overcome by the Kingdom of Christ and yet it is not yet fully overcome. Second, we see that the true light is '*already* shining'. The true light, which is Jesus in all of His glory, is already shining. As His already-shining light shines it dispels the darkness, and yet the darkness is not yet finally gone.

What do you see when you look around; the true light or darkness? Both! John is truly communicating an overlap. The age of darkness and the age of light are coexisting in this world. Our experience testifies to this very reality, does it not? This in no way means that light and darkness are friends, but it does mean that we live in an age of transition. Our world is characterized by both darkness and light. The darkness is in the process of passing away and the true light is in the process of completely overtaking the darkness. For the time being we are stuck between the already and the not yet. The darkness is **already** being pushed out and yet it is **not yet** fully pushed out; the true light is **already** shining and yet it has **not yet** fully overcome the darkness.

Illustrating Our Present Reality

We live in an age of transition. There have been a few illustrations that have been helpful to communicate the transitional nature of our present age. First, it can be likened to the transitional period common to our modern day presidential elections. After the votes were counted in November of 2008, Barak Obama was named the 'President-Elect of the United States'. It was not until January 20, 2010, however, that Obama was officially sworn in as the 'President of the United States of America'. For a short three month period the nation underwent

a transition of power. Although the victory was in the bag for Obama—the votes had already been counted—there was a three month transition before he actually took office as president. Bush was still the official President throughout this time, and yet he knew that his term as President was all but over. This three month period is oftentimes viewed as a time of vulnerability because there is no clear leader; the presiding President has no time to affect any real change (and thus is often times referred to as a ‘sitting duck’) and the President-elect is not yet officially in office. Sometimes the transition is smooth (as it was in 2008) and other times the transition is fraught with conflict.

This is an imperfect picture of the age in which we are presently in. I am in no way suggesting that either Bush or Obama are a picture of either Satan or Jesus (this illustration would work for any historic President/President-elect transition). The reason why it is hard to see the similarity between the two operations (that is, between the transitional nature of this present age in God’s redemptive activity and the transitional nature of the presidency) is because God’s time table is much larger than that of our modern day elections. The transitional interval in modern day elections is only a matter of three months, with God it is a matter of millennia upon millennia (upon possibly millennia, etc.). However, we must remember that “with the Lord one day is like 1,000 years, and 1,000 years is like one day” (2 Peter 3:8). Jesus has the victory in the bag—the votes have been counted, as it were—and yet we live in a day and age of transition. The age of transition may seem excruciatingly (faith-shakingly even—see 2 Peter 3) long to us short-lived mortals, but to our eternal God the time between his ascension and second coming is a mere breath.

Another helpful illustration is that of a rescue on the sea. A boat capsizes leaving a straggler clinging to a lifesaver. A rescue boat comes along and pulls the stranded passenger out of the tumultuous sea. In one sense the person has been rescued; however, we must remember that the rescued passenger is still in the middle of the vast sea. He may be in a lifeboat but his feet are not yet on dry ground. Even though land may be seen on the horizon, he still feels the waves of the unpredictable sea crash against the side of the boat; he still feels the mist spray off the bow of the boat as it dips up and down with the swelling of the water. The man has been rescued and yet the lifeboat has not yet made it to shore. There is no questioning the ability of the lifeboat to make it to shore and yet that is his greatest anticipation. This is true of us as well. God has bought our salvation, securing it through His Son’s death on the cross. When we place our faith in Jesus as our only hope we are saved. And yet, although we are in the boat, although our future salvation is secured, we have not yet reached dry ground. Our eschatological salvation is in the bag and yet we are still in the life boat making our way to the shore.²

These are just a few of the illustrations that have been used to describe the already/not yet tension in regard to a believer’s personal salvation and in regard to the already/not yet tension in regard to the Kingdom of God and reign of Jesus Christ. Consider what Gordon D. Fee has to say to this issue.

² I got this illustration from Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*; *The New International Greek Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), 99. Thiselton laid forth another illustration that was quite helpful. He says, “Christians are like people who were once in the cold, freezing to death, but now have been transferred into a warm room. The forces of its heat will decisively overcome the forces of the cold; but in the present both sets of forces are active. Some limbs are already warm; but others have still to thaw out completely. The forces of heat are decisive, but are not yet the only operative forces. The decisive event has occurred, but the process which it set in motion takes time to reach completion.” Ibid.

“Very early, beginning with Peter’s sermon in Acts 3, the early Christians came to realize that Jesus had not come to usher in the ‘final’ end but the ‘beginning’ of the end, as it were. Thus they came to see that with Jesus’ death and resurrection, and with the coming of the Spirit, the blessings and benefits of the future had already come. In a sense, therefore, the end had already come. But in another sense the end had not yet fully come. Thus it was *already* but *not yet*.

The early believers, therefore, learned to be a truly eschatological people. They lived between the times—that is, between the *beginning* of the end and the *consummation* of the end.”³

As we did last week, I want to take a large sampling of passages to simply reinforce the fact that we live sandwiched between the already and the not yet. This morning, however, we will only be considering passages which speak to the already/not yet nature of the Kingdom of God/the reign of Christ. Consider these passages with me.

The Kingdom

The Scriptures clearly teach that although the Kingdom of God, which is really synonymous with the reign of God, was inaugurated⁴ upon the death, burial, resurrection and ascension of Christ, His Kingdom will not be consummated⁵ until the second coming.

Already

Luke 17:20-21; “Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God will come, He answered them, “The kingdom of God is not coming with something observable; no one will say, ‘Look here!’ or ‘There!’ For you see, the kingdom of God is among you.”

1 John 2:8; “Yet I am writing you a new command, which is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining.”

Matthew 6:10; “Your kingdom come--Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Not Yet

1 John 2:8; “Yet I am writing you a new command, which is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining.”

Matthew 6:10; “Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

Revelation 12:10; Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: The salvation and the power and the **kingdom** of our God and the authority of His Messiah have now come, because

³ Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All its Worth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 146-47. I attribute the above quote to Fee because they state in the *Preface* of the book that Fee wrote Chapters 1-4, 6-8, and 13. This quote is found in Chapter 7.

⁴ To *inaugurate* means to “to make a formal beginning of; initiate; commence; begin.” See www.dictionary.com

⁵ To *consummate* means to “to bring to completion or fruition;” “to realize or achieve; fulfill.” See www.dictionary.com

the accuser of our brothers has been thrown out: the one who accuses them before our God day and night.

The Kingdom of God is already among us, the true light is already shining, and yet we are to pray that God would make his heavenly kingdom a present reality on this earth. We know that the light has not yet fully overtaken the darkness and we know that there is great need to pray for the Kingdom to come because God's will is by and large not being done on this earth. We pray for the Kingdom to come because we know that God can make it come—because it has already been inaugurated. However, Revelation 12, which is speaking of a future day, gives clear evidence that God's Kingdom will only be consummated at the second coming of Jesus. There is a very clear already/not yet reality to the Kingdom of God.⁶

Jesus' Reign

Although the Scriptures clearly communicate the fact that Jesus **already** reigns as King, the Scriptures also teach that Jesus is **not yet** ruling in the fullest sense of the word. Consider the already/not aspect of the reign of Jesus with me.

Already

Acts 2:32-35; “God has resurrected this Jesus. We are all witnesses of this. Therefore, since He has been exalted to the right hand of God and has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit, He has poured out what you both see and hear. For it was not David who ascended into the heavens, but he himself says: ‘**The Lord said to my Lord, ‘Sit at My right hand until I make your enemies Your footstool.’**”

Hebrews 1:4-14; “...”

Not Yet

⁶ George Eldon Ladd, in his landmark work *A Theology of the New Testament*, has much to say about the already/not yet tension in regard to the Kingdom of God. See George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993). Although Ladd does not mention specifically the already/not yet tension in this quote, what he does have to say about the Kingdom of God is well worthy of consideration. “Jesus’ teachings about the Son of Man and the Kingdom of God are closely analogous in certain aspects of their structure. We have seen that the Kingdom of God is the perfect realization of the glorious reign of God that will be experienced only with the inauguration of the Age to Come. In advance of the manifestation of the Kingdom in glory, however, this same Kingdom of God, his kingly reign, has manifested itself among men and women in an unexpected form. The Kingdom is to work secretly among them. While the evil age continues, the Kingdom of God has begun to work in a form almost unnoticed by the world. Its presence can be recognized only by those who have spiritual perception to see it. This is the mystery of the Kingdom: the divine secret that in the ministry of Jesus has for the first time been disclosed to human beings. The future apocalyptic, glorious Kingdom has come secretly among them in advance of its open manifestation.

So it is with the Son of Man. Jesus will be the heavenly, glorious Son of Man coming with the clouds to judge people and to bring the glorious Kingdom. However, in advance of this apocalyptic manifestation as the Son of Man, Jesus is the Son of Man living among them incognito, whose ministry is not to reign in glory but in humiliation to suffer and to die for them. The future, heavenly Son of Man is already present among women and men but in a form they hardly expected. There is indeed a messianic secret even as there is a mystery of the Kingdom of God.” Ibid., 156.

Acts 2:23-35; “For it was not David who ascended into the heavens, but he himself says: **‘The Lord said to my Lord, ‘Sit at My right hand until I make your enemies Your footstool.’**”

Revelation 19:6; “Hallelujah—because our Lord God, the Almighty, has begun to reign!”

There is a clear sense in these verses that although Jesus began to reign upon His ascension to the right hand of God, He has not yet fully established His reign. Notice two things. First, when Jesus took a seat at the Father’s right hand, He began His reign as King. F.F. Bruce explains the significance of Jesus’ sitting down at the right hand of the Father. He says, “... it refers to the king’s enthronement, and carries with it the promise of victory over all his enemies.”⁷ In other words, Jesus sat down at the right hand of the Father that He might begin to rule as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Jesus’ present reign, then, is a time of gathering. He is establishing His rule incrementally—gathering His enemies for the day of Judgment—when he will establish His Lordship in their final destruction. The word ‘until’ in Acts 2:35 communicates the fact that all of God’s enemies have not yet been brought into subjection to Him. The tension between the already and the not yet is communicated in this one verse. Second, notice the phrase, “has begun to reign” in Revelation 19:6. This shout of acclamation comes after Jesus has begun to finally establish His Lordship over *all* of the enemies of God. Jesus has just defeated Babylon (whatever Babylon might be a reference to) and Jesus’ demolishing of Babylon confirms the fact that His final victory over sin, Satan, and death is right around the corner. We find this final victory recorded just a few short verses later in Revelation 20. The shout of acclamation in Revelation 19 is the cry of victory because the much anticipated destruction of all the enemies of God is at hand. Thus, although Jesus is **already** in the process of gathering all of His enemies, He has **not yet** established final victory over His enemies and will not until He comes back in all of His glory.⁸

⁷ F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1990), 63.

⁸ Consider the following comment by David F. Wells as he explains the already/not yet nature of the reign of King Jesus. “Christ’s rule is contested in the sense that while evil is even now under his sovereign rule, and even though its doom has been declared, and even though its back has already been broken at the cross, it has not yet been taken to the scaffold. The church, therefore, has to be wary as long as it is in this world. It cannot become triumphalistic. It must seek the protection of God’s armor (Eph. 6:10-18), grace, and power. We have not yet come to the final moment of conquest when Christ ‘delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power’ (1 Cor. 15:24). Only then will all of created reality that has been fractured and broken by the intrusions of satanic disorder be eternally cleansed.” David F. Wells, *The Courage to be Protestant: Truth-lovers, Marketers, and Emergents in the Postmodern World* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008), 204.

He then goes on to explain how this meets us where we are at; “Christian hope is not about wishing things will get better. It is not about hoping that emptiness will go away, meaning return, and life will be stripped of its uncertainties, aches, and anxieties. Nor does it have anything to do with techniques for improving fallen human life, be those therapeutic, spiritual, or even religious. Hope has to do with the knowledge of ‘the age to come.’ This redemption is already penetrating ‘this age.’ The sin, death, and meaninglessness of the one age are being transformed by the righteousness, life, and meaning of the other. What has emptied out life, what has scarred and blackened it, is being displaced by what is rejuvenating and transforming it. More than that, hope is hope because it knows it has become part of a realm, a kingdom, that endures. It knows that evil is doomed, that it will be banished. This kind of hope has left behind it the ship of ‘this age,’ which is sinking. And if this other realm, this place where Christ is even now ruling, did not exist, Christians would be ‘of all people most to be pitied’ (1 Cor. 15:19).” Ibid., 206.

Jesus' Defeat of Satan

The Scriptures clearly teach that although Jesus **already** dealt Satan a death blow (from which he will not recover) on the cross of Calvary, Satan has **not yet** been finally judged. Consider the following passages with me.

Already

Hebrews 2:15-16; “Now since the children have flesh and blood in common, he also shared in these, so that through His death He might destroy the one holding the power of death—that is, the Devil—and free those who were held in slavery all their lives by the fear of death.

Not Yet

Satan is referred to as ‘the god of this age’ (2 Corinthians 4:4), ‘the ruler of this world’ (John 12:31), ‘the prince of the power of the air, the spirit now working in the disobedient’ (Ephesians 2:2), and John says of Satan, ‘the whole world is under the sway of the evil one (1 John 5:19).

1 Peter 5:8; “Be sober! Be on the alert! Your adversary the Devil is prowling around like a roaring lion, looking for anyone he can devour.”

Revelation 20:10; “The Devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet are, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.”

Jesus, through His death and resurrection, gained clear and certain victory over Satan. Jesus, the seed of the woman, did bruise the head of the serpent on the cross (Genesis 3:15). Jesus has dealt Satan a death blow; his final defeat is sure, and yet he fights on. Ken Blue has made a helpful parallel between the dying attempts of destruction by Satan in these last days and Hitler in the last days of WWII when he knew that defeat was soon around the corner. Blue says,

“In God’s war with evil, ‘D-Day’ occurred with the death and resurrection of Christ. Ultimate victory is now assured; yet the fight rages on till ‘V-E Day,’ the glorious return of Christ. Between these times, the Church presses the battle against the evil which remains in the world. Blood is still shed in these battles, and some of the blood will be ours, but we are assured that the ultimate victory of the past will be fully realized in the future.”⁹

Or consider the infamous hymn penned by Martin Luther *A Mighty Fortress is Our God* (quoting the first three verses only).

A Mighty Fortress is Our God

⁹ See Ken Blue, “D-Day Before V-E Day” in *Perspectives On the World Christian Movement: A Reader*; Edited by Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne. 3rd ed. (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1999), 72.

A mighty fortress is our God,
A bulwark never failing.
Our helper He amid the flood
Of mortal ills prevailing.
For still our ancient foe
Doth seek to work us woe.
His craft and power are great,
And, armed with cruel hate,
On earth is not his equal.

Did we in our own strength confide,
Our striving would be losing,
Were not the right man on our side,
The man of God's own choosing.
Dost ask who that may be?
Christ Jesus, it is He.
Lord Sabboth, his name,
From age to age the same,
And He must win the battle.

And though this world, with devils filled,
Should threaten to undo us,
We will not fear, for God hath willed
His truth to triumph through us.
The Prince of Darkness grim,
We tremble not for him.
His rage we can endure,
For lo, his doom is sure.
One little word shall fell him.

Satan's was dealt a death blow on the cross and yet he fights with vigor, which is why we must "resist him". Nonetheless, as clearly seen by Revelation 20:10, Jesus will win final victory over him at His glorious return, which is why Luther can triumphantly say, 'For lo, his doom is sure.' Satan has **already** been defeated—Jesus' final victory over Him is **already** in the bag—and yet he has **not yet** been finally defeated. There is a clear already/not yet aspect to Jesus' victory over the accuser of the brethren.

Jesus' Defeat of Death

Just as with His defeat over Satan, Jesus' defeat over death has been secured but will only be finalized at His second coming. Consider these verses with me.

Already

Acts 2:24; "God raised Him up, ending the pains of death, because it was not possible for Him to be held by it."

Hebrews 2:14-15; "Now since the children have flesh and blood in common, He also shared in these, so that through His death He might destroy the one holding the power of death—that is, the Devil—and free those who were held in slavery all their lives by the fear of death."

Not Yet

1 Corinthians 15:24-26; “Then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to God the Father, when He abolishes all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign until He puts all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy to be abolished is death.”

Revelation 20:13-14; “Then the sea gave up its dead, and Death and Hades gave up their dead; all were judged according to their works. Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.”

Jesus has already imploded the grave (evidenced by the resurrection)—it was not powerful enough to hold him—and yet death is the last enemy to be defeated, and it will not be defeated until Jesus throws it into the lake of fire at the very end of the age.¹⁰ Jesus’ final victory over death is still a future event and yet He has already set us free from the fear of death. This is why He can promise eternal life to those who come to Him in faith and repentance. And yet, all those who are promised eternal life will have to pass through the death of our mortal bodies. As Jesus says in John 11:25-26; “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in Me, even if he dies, will live. Everyone who lives and believes in me will never die-ever. Do you believe this?” There is clear tension in Jesus’ words here. And why? Because we live between the already and the not yet.

Conclusion

Well, I trust that this has been helpful. Christianity in our present age is caught between the already and the not yet. We live in the time between the times—the time between the decisive victory, when our salvation was secured by the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, and the time of His glorious appearing when He will bring final salvation to those who are waiting for Him (Hebrews 9:27-28).

I hope I have given sufficient proof to show that this is no mere footnote in the Bible; this already/not yet perspective unmistakably permeates every nook and cranny of the New Testament. This is no mere isolated doctrine; it is the very characterization of the shape and posture of the Christian life in this present age.

Once again, how does this help us? It helps us by giving us a hopeful and yet realistic perspective not only in regard to what God can and wants to do in our midst but what He intends to do in our midst (and in our world). So many Christians live lives of defeat because they do not realize that the blessings of the future age are to at least one degree or another already-present realities, actualized by the Spirit of God. Others live lives of depression because they are not biblically informed about God’s intentions for this present age—they have ‘pie in the sky’ ideas about God’s work in this present world, as if it were His goal to completely rid this earth of all evil. And when God fails to live up to their expectations, they are thrust down in depression, suspicious of His presence in their lives. I in no way want to put God in a box and yet I want to

¹⁰ Consider the following quote by Ladd concerning the resurrection in light of the already/not yet tension of the New Testament age. “While the resurrection of the dead remains an event at the last day, in the resurrection of Christ this eschatological event has already begun to be unfolded. The ‘halfway’ point is passed. The early church found itself living in a tension between realization and expectation—between ‘already’ and ‘not yet.’ The age of fulfillment has come; the day of consummation stands yet in the future.” Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 368.

be biblically informed about what God has said that He will do on this earth. It is not His intention to create a utopia on this earth. He wants His people to know that life is going to be a mixed bag, full of ups and downs and in-betweens. Sometimes the church will grow like a weed, at other times it will digress, and still at other times it will stay the course. God has no intention on bringing heaven to earth in any complete fashion, and yet God has every desire to see His Kingdom advance.

There is hope for the hopeless and yet our ultimate hope ought to rest in what God is going to do in the future. Never underestimate God but always take Him at His word. If you are down in the dumps wondering where God is at, take heart in knowing that He is in the business of redeeming and restoring and reconciling and saving even now. If you are on the mountain top and are rejoicing in God's present activity in your life, never lose sight of the fact that the joy of His coming Kingdom will outweigh anything you have ever experienced on this earth. We must never lose heart when, from our perspective, it seems that all has been lost to the enemy (whether in church life, or in your marriage, or in your family, or at your job, or wherever), but we also must never sink our feet into the clay of this earth as if anything happening on this earthly sphere were the 'end all be all'

God has big plans for what He is going to do through us and for us on this earth, and yet He will give us enough unrest and pain and rejection and sorrow and disappointment so that we never forget that the bulk of what He has for us is not to be found until Jesus comes in all of His glory. The main message: be encouraged but don't sink your heels into the clay of this earth too far. Life on this earth is bittersweet in every sense of the word. For the Christian, sweetness will triumph, but bitterness (not in the sinful sense of the word) will accompany Christian experience until the day we die.¹¹

¹¹ I highly recommend Ariel J. Vanderhorst's short blog post *Learn to Live with Pain, Then Go One Better*. The tension between the already and the not yet is not discussed in explicit terms, but the effects of this tension in our everyday lives is. <http://bittersweetblue.blogspot.com/2007/11/learn-to-live-with-pain-then-go-one.html>.