

100 BIBLE LESSONS

Give these lessons to people you visit, youth groups, hospital patients, church visitors and new members. Use them in Sunday School, bus ministry, jail services, nursing homes, Christian schools, small discussion groups and many other places. God's Word will answer your questions and help solve your problems. For Bible study purposes. Not to be sold.

LESSON 18 – THE AGE TO COME

INTRODUCTION

According to Scripture, the underlying idea of history is that time and events flow in a series of successive ages toward God's intended culmination (Mt 13:39; 28:20; 1 Co 10:11; Heb 9:26). God distinguishes between succeeding historical epochs and calls on us to be alert to the characteristics of the age in which we live.

I. THIS PRESENT EVIL AGE.

"This age" is not only the undetermined period of time between Christ's first and second comings; it is also the spiritual and psychological state of a humanity that ignores all that God has done in Christ to redeem mankind.

As a spiritual and psychological state, this age is evil (Gal 1:4). Its wise men and its philosophers are blind to God and ignorant of Him, for they scornfully reject the crucified Christ (1 Co 1:20-25). The principles by which this age operates are "foolishness in God's sight" (1 Co 3:19), for lost humanity is blinded by illusions that are sponsored by Satan, the unacknowledged "god of this age" (2 Co 4:4).

The Bible's exciting news about this present age is that God has invaded it and mankind's dark territory (Eph 6:12). Jesus has acted to rescue us (Gal 1:4), not by removing us from the world but by calling us to share in a divine transformation. Believers actually taste "the powers of the coming age" (Heb 6:5), for God is at work now to transform us into Jesus' likeness (2 Co 3:18), and He will do so fully at the resurrection (1 Jn 3:2-3). Our calling is to "live godly lives in this present age" (Tit 2:12), refusing to be "conformed to this world" (Ro 12:2). Instead of conforming, we are to open our lives to God, permitting Him to reshape our attitudes and perspective. We thus learn to live by God's principles rather than by the subtly distorted principles that infuse human society, and we experience God's blessings now and in the age to come (Mk 10:29-30; Lk 18:30; 1 Ti 6:19).

II. THE END OF THIS AGE.

The Bible consistently announces that history is on the move--toward a planned culmination. The present age, marred by Satan's evil influence and by the dark passions and twisted values of a lost humanity, will come to an end. God Himself will break into history again. He will gather all mankind together for final judgment (Mt 13:40-43; 25:31-46; Mk 13).

For now, the present age with its evil characteristics coexists with a unique expression of God's kingdom, seen in the living church. But when history reaches its intended end, God's decisive intervention will forever separate light from darkness, good from evil, true from false.

III. THE AGE TO COME.

God is unquestionably the "King of the Ages" (1 Ti 1:17); He not only created the physical universe but also guides the course of history (Heb 1:2; 11:3). Although key elements of God's plan and purpose remained hidden from the ancients (Ro 16:25; Eph 3:9; Col 1:26), God has remained in control. In a real sense, this present age is the "end of the ages," for in it the full meaning of human existence and the answer to man's struggle with sin and death have been revealed. Jesus has come and unveiled God's plan in his sacrifice to take away sin (Heb 9:26-28). From our present perspective we can see the full scope of God's plan to redeem and purify humanity. We look ahead with confidence to our resurrection to an endless life in God's new and purified universe to come.

Today we are aliens, living in a society of the lost. But even in this present age, we have access through Jesus to the blessings of the age to come.

Notes adapted from "Expository Dict. of Bible Words," pgs. 27-29. Lawrence Richards.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What do the Gospels mean when they speak of the "end of the age"?
2. What does Scripture reveal about the "age to come"?
3. What is "this present evil age" that is described so graphically in the Epistles?
4. How do you and I relate to God's ages?
5. What are the blessings of the "age to come"?
6. Explain God's plan to redeem and purify humanity.