



Jurnal Igreja

“Caeli enarrant gloriam Dei”

URL : <http://jurnal.sttekklesia.ac.id>

e-ISSN : -

Edition : Jurnal Igreja, Volume 2, Nomor 1, Desember 2025

Page : 81 - 106

‘The Already and The Not-Yet’ of Redemption: Inaugurated Kingdom and Eschatological Hope for Today’s Church

Alexander Situmorang, Elis L. Ay

ABSTRAK

Artikel ini menyelidiki konsep teologis "sudah" dan "belum" yang berkaitan dengan Kerajaan Allah yang telah diresmikan dan harapan penebusan yang berkelanjutan dalam kehidupan Gereja. Paradigma "sudah-namun-belum" mencerminkan eskatologi alkitabiah di mana karya penebusan Allah telah dimulai melalui kehidupan, kematian, dan kebangkitan Yesus Kristus, namun masih menantikan penyempurnaan terakhirnya pada kedatangan-Nya yang kedua. Dengan menelaah teks-teks kunci dari Kitab Injil dan surat-surat Paulus, studi ini menunjukkan bagaimana ketegangan eskatologis ini membentuk identitas dan misi Gereja di zaman ini. Artikel ini selanjutnya mengeksplorasi implikasi etis dan misi dari hidup "*di antara zaman*", ketika umat beriman dipanggil untuk mewujudkan realitas Kerajaan Allah sambil mengantisipasi perwujudannya yang penuh. Dalam dunia yang ditandai oleh penderitaan, ketidakadilan, dan kerinduan rohani, harapan eskatologis yang didasarkan pada pemerintahan Kristus yang telah diresmikan memampukan Gereja untuk hidup dengan ketekunan, tujuan, dan pengharapan yang penuh sukacita. Studi ini bertujuan untuk menawarkan refleksi teologis konstruktif yang menjembatani teologi biblis dan praktik gerejawi kontemporer.

Kata kunci:
Kerajaan yang Dimulai,
Harapan Eskatologis, Yang
Sudah dan Yang Belum,
Penebusan

ABSTRACT

This present article investigates the theological concept of the already and The not- yet” as it relates to the inaugurated Kingdom of God and the ongoing hope of redemption within the life of the Church. The “*already-*

not-yet” paradigm reflects a biblical eschatology in which God’s redemptive work has already begun through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, yet awaits its final consummation at His second coming. By examining key scriptural texts from both the Gospels and Pauline letters, this study demonstrates how this eschatological tension informs the Church’s identity and mission in the present age. The article further explores the ethical and missional implications of living “between the times,” where believers are called to embody the reality of God’s Kingdom while anticipating its full realization. In a world marked by suffering, injustice, and spiritual longing, the eschatological hope grounded in the inaugurated reign of Christ empowers the Church to live with endurance, purpose, and joyful expectation. This study aims to offer a constructive theological reflection that bridges biblical theology and contemporary ecclesial practice.

Keywords:
Doing theology,
Inaugurated Kingdom,
Eschatological Hope, The
Already and The Not Yet,
Redemption

Introduction

The theological tension of the “*already-not-yet*” within Christian eschatology has garnered renewed scholarly attention in recent years, particularly regarding its implications for the Church’s identity, mission, and hope. At the heart of this paradigm we can find the doctrine of the inaugurated Kingdom—the assertion that God’s redemptive reign was initiated in the first coming of Christ, yet awaits fulfillment at His return. As Davis quotes George Eldon Ladd in *Inaugurated Eschatology and Corporate Worship: God’s Kingdom Breaks In* emphasized nearly half a century ago, the Kingdom of God is both present and future; this tension continues to resonate powerfully in contemporary theological discourse ¹. Thus, as Davis echoes George Eldon Ladd’s enduring insight, the Kingdom of God must be

¹ Rebecca Davis, “Inaugurated Eschatology and Corporate Worship: God’s Kingdom Breaks In,” in *Presented at Wesleyan Liturgical Society Meeting*, 2019.

understood as both a present reality and a future hope—a duality that continues to shape the contours of Christian theology and practice. The tension between what has already been inaugurated in Christ and what remains to be fulfilled invites the Church to live in faithful anticipation, grounded in the reality of God’s reign while yearning for its consummation. Far from being a contradiction, this eschatological paradox energizes Christian worship, discipleship, and mission, calling believers to embody the values of the Kingdom in the “now” while directing their ultimate hope toward the “not yet.” In this way, Ladd’s vision remains not only theologically relevant but pastorally vital in a world that longs for redemption’s full realization.

Recent contributions, such as Thomas R. Schreiner’s *New Testament Theology*, underscore this trajectory by framing Christ’s life, death, and resurrection as an eschatological inauguration that has not yet reached its consummation². Schreiner maintains that redemption is currently experienced in part, even as Christians anticipate its full realization and thereby live in a divinely created tension. This theological “in-between” has profound consequences for how the Church understands its place in history and its engagement with a broken world.

In parallel, online scholarship such as that published by Divine Narratives has popularized the practical and pastoral dimensions of the inaugurated Kingdom. They emphasize that ordinary Christian practices—such as worship, sacrament, and community life—are tangible expressions of the “already,” even while believers wait

² Thomas R. Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ*. (Louisville, KY: Baker Academic, 2008). 150

with hope for the “not yet.”³ Humphreys speaks of the inaugurated Kingdom as the “beauty” of eschatology lived out in the church’s everydayness ⁴. This lived eschatology invites the Church to witness to God’s reign not only in doctrine but in daily practice, where hope is made tangible through love, and redemption is embodied in action. In embracing this vision, the Church becomes a living signpost, pointing toward the fullness of the Kingdom that is yet to come, while manifesting its presence in the here and now.

Theologically, this paradigm is supported by biblical exegesis of key texts. Jesus’ announcement in Mark 1:15-“*The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near*”—reveals an eschatological reality already breaking into history ⁵. The Pauline corpus continues this theme. For instance, Romans 8:23 speaks of believers groaning as they await the redemption of their bodies, even as they possess the “firstfruits of the Spirit.”⁶ Similarly, 1 Corinthians 15:20 describes Christ’s resurrection as the “firstfruits,” pointing toward the future resurrection of all believers ⁷. This dual aspect is crucial for pastoral resilience and ethical formation in a suffering world.

³ Kara Carter, “God’s Story, Our Story: Telling, Re-Telling, Re-Storying,” 2022.

⁴ Edith M Humphrey, “New Creation in the Christian Scriptures and Tradition’,” *St Andrews Encyclopaedia of Theology*, 2024.

⁵ Jonathan M Menn and Equipping Church Leaders East Africa, “MARK—PART,” 2021.

⁶ Benoit Bourguine, “The Theology of Grace According to the Pauline Corpus,” *Transdisciplinary Approaches on Reconciliation Research*, 2024, 59.

⁷ Charles D T Miller, “An Analysis of Paul’s Argument for the Nature of the Resurrection Body in I Corinthians 15,” n.d.

From a missional perspective, theologians such as Leonard Smith have even argued that inaugurated eschatology offers compelling frameworks for inclusivity and justice. Wood contends that the presence of the Spirit and the restoration of God's image precede full consummation, providing impetus for the Church to challenge stigma and embrace marginalized communities.⁸ In this way, inaugurated eschatology becomes not just a concept, but a catalyst for transformation in areas such as gender justice and social reconciliation.

However, the "*already-not-yet*" framework is not without its critics or alternative voices. Progressive dispensationalists, for example, uphold a view of partial fulfillment in the present age yet maintain sharper distinctions between what is inaugurated and what is future⁹. Some voices within realized eschatology push toward collapsing the tension altogether-emphasizing the Kingdom as fully present and minimizing future expectation.¹¹ These competing views highlight the ongoing theological stakes: does the Church live in anticipation, or is the Kingdom already sufficiently present to shape all of its life and action?

For the contemporary Church, these theological distinctions have real-world implications. If believers embrace the inaugurated Kingdom as both present and future, then their identity becomes inherently dynamic, marked by present participation in God's reign and eschatological expectation¹⁰. It shapes ethical life

⁸ Leonard S Smith, "Formulating A Righteous Ecclesiology," 2024.

⁹ Donald Henrikson, "The Church Polity of Progressive Covenantalism in Light of the Body of Christ Metaphor" (Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2022).

¹⁰ Philip Kariatlis, "The Nature and Mission of the Church: Anticipation and Realisation of God's Eternal Kingdom.," *Phronema* 39, no. 1 (2024).235-67

(worship, justice, service) and informs mission (evangelism, community formation, social engagement). Furthermore, it offers pastoral hope in suffering as Christians situate their lives within the unfolding story of redemption.

This study, therefore, seeks to deepen the theological articulation of the inaugurated Kingdom and its eschatological hope, drawing on recent scholarship and scriptural exegesis, to serve both academic and ecclesial communities. By bridging biblical theology with practical theology, the article will explore how the "*already-not-yet*" tension can nurture a resilient, hopeful, and missionally engaged Church today.

Method

This study adopts a qualitative theological method with a strong emphasis on biblical-exegetical analysis, seeking to explore the theological tension of the "*already-not yet*" within the framework of inaugurated eschatology. The research primarily engages in close reading of selected biblical texts-such as Mark 1:15, Romans 8:23, and 1 Corinthians 15 interpreted within their historical, literary, and canonical contexts.

Drawing upon the insights of Gordon D. Fee, exegesis in this study is treated not merely as an academic tool but as a theological discipline aimed at hearing God's Word anew in the present. Fee emphasizes that proper exegesis involves

both historical-grammatical investigation and theological reflection, with the ultimate goal of recovering the message as it was understood by its original audience and making it applicable for today's Church ¹¹. Fee's perspective on exegesis affirms that biblical interpretation is both an academic discipline and a spiritual task. It requires rigorous attention to the original context of Scripture, yet refuses to leave theology in the past. Instead, it calls the Church to hear and embody God's Word in the present. Thus, proper exegesis serves as a bridge between the ancient Word and the contemporary world, ensuring that theology remains rooted in revelation while actively shaping the Church's witness today.

Similarly, Walter C. Kaiser Jr. advocates for a text-driven exegetical approach that focuses on discerning the original intention of the biblical author through syntactical, lexical, and contextual analysis. For Kaiser, theology must arise from the text itself rather than being imposed upon it.¹² This aligns with the study's aim to derive theological meaning organically from the scriptural witness concerning the inaugurated Kingdom and eschatological hope.

Complementing exegetical work, this study also utilizes thematic theological synthesis-organizing insights from Scripture and scholarly sources to construct a coherent understanding of redemption as both present and future. Academic

¹¹ Gordon D Fee, *New Testament Exegesis: A Handbook for Students and Pastors, 3rd Ed.*, 3rd ed (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002).26

¹² Kaiser Jr, Walter C.. *Mission in the Old Testament: Israel as a Light to the Nations*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2000).25

literature from the past decade is employed to situate this inquiry within current theological discourse.

Result and Discussion

Definition and Terminology of “The Already and the Not Yet” Eschatology

Eschatology, derived from the Greek word *eschatos* (ἔσχατος), meaning “last” or “final,” refers to the theological study of the end times, encompassing doctrines such as the return of Christ, resurrection, final judgment, and the new creation. *Traditionally, eschatology was viewed as a future-oriented discipline, concerned mainly with events that would occur at the end of human history.* However, with the development of inaugurated eschatology, the focus has shifted to a dynamic tension that acknowledges both the present realization and future fulfillment of redemptive promises.

The phrase “the already and the not yet” encapsulates this tension. *It refers to the theological conviction that the Kingdom of God has already broken into human history through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, yet it is not yet fully consummated*¹³. This formulation affirms that while certain eschatological blessings—such as salvation, spiritual rebirth, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit—are experienced now, the final realization of God’s purposes awaits Christ’s return.

¹³ Reuben M Bredenhof, “The Kingdom of God in Jesus and Paul,” n.d.

This concept is deeply rooted in the New Testament, especially in the teachings of Jesus and the writings of Paul ¹⁴. For instance, in Mark 1:15, Jesus proclaims, "The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand," indicating a present reality. Conversely, in Romans 8:23, Paul speaks of believers who "groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies," highlighting an eschatological hope yet to be fulfilled.

In The Presence of the Future, Ladd argued that Jesus introduced the Kingdom of God as a present spiritual reality that will be fully established at His second coming. According to Ladd, "the Kingdom is here now, though the world has not yet been delivered from evil."¹⁵ This inaugurated model provides a biblical-theological basis for understanding Christian life as a tension between realized redemption and future restoration.

Another important contributor to this concept is Oscar Cullmann, who framed eschatological tension using the analogy of *D-Day* and *V-Day* from World War II. In his work *Christ and Time*, Cullmann likened Christ's death and resurrection to the decisive victory at Normandy (D-Day), while the final consummation corresponds to V-Day.¹⁶ Though the ultimate win is guaranteed, the Church continues to battle in the interim period between the two events. Cullmann's analogy has become one of the most enduring ways of explaining the already-not-yet nature of Christian

¹⁴ Bredenhof.

¹⁵ George Eldon Ladd, *The Presence of the Future: The Eschatology of Biblical Realism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdsman, 1974).52-60

¹⁶ Oscar Cullmann, *Christ and Time: The Primitive Christian Conception of Time and History*. Rev. Ed., Rev. ed (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964).92

hope. Reformed theologian Anthony A. Hoekema also strongly supports the inaugurated eschatological model. In *The Bible and the Future*, he insists that eschatology should not be confined to the end times but begins with Christ's first coming.¹⁷ For Hoekema, the resurrection inaugurates the age to come, and Christians already participate in eternal life, though its fullness awaits. This perspective safeguards against both extreme futurism and over-realized eschatology.

Thus, the eschatological framework of "*the already and the not yet*" offers a robust theological vision that is both biblically grounded and pastorally relevant. It helps the Church understand her present identity as the people of the Kingdom who have received redemption yet still long for its fullness. Through the contributions of theologians like Ladd, Cullmann, and Hoekema, the Church is equipped with a vision of hope that calls believers to live faithfully in the tension of two ages-anchored in what God has done and expectant for what He will do.

Biblical Foundations of "The Already and the Not Yet" Eschatology and Supporting Theological Arguments

The eschatological vision of the New Testament presents a theological paradox that has become foundational in contemporary Christian theology: the reality that

¹⁷ Anthony A Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdsman, 1979).

God's redemptive Kingdom has already broken into human history through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, yet its ultimate fulfillment is still to come. This tension is often expressed through the phrase "*the already and the not yet*"-a term that captures the dynamic nature of inaugurated eschatology¹⁸. Unlike traditional eschatologies that confined redemptive fulfillment to a distant future, this framework holds that many of God's promises have begun to be realized in the present age, although their consummation remains future.

This vision is rooted deeply in the teachings of Jesus. In Mark 1:15, Jesus announces, "The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." Such declarations indicate that the Kingdom is no longer a distant hope but a present reality¹⁹. Jesus' actions-healing the sick, casting out demons, forgiving sins-demonstrate the arrival of divine rule amid a broken world. However, Jesus also teaches His disciples to pray, "Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10), implying that the full realization of the Kingdom is still anticipated. Thus, His ministry inaugurates the Kingdom, while the eschaton-its completion-awaits His return.

The apostle Paul carries forward this tension in his epistles. In Romans 8:23, Paul affirms that believers "who have the firstfruits of the Spirit" still "groan inwardly" as they await the final redemption of their bodies²⁰. The present possession of the

¹⁸ Patrick S Millsap, "Toward an Understanding of the Cross-Dimensional Phenomenon of Emergent Eschatological Informing" (Regent University, 2024).

¹⁹ Myungwoo Kim, "The Consistency of the Kingdom of God Through Israel's Unconditional Covenants," 2022.

²⁰ Samuel Arthur Knaus, "Essential Groaning: The Resurrection Hope of Romans 8: 18–25 and 2 Corinthians 4: 7–5: 10 Against Word of Faith Theology" (Liberty University, 2024).

Spirit, a clear sign of the age to come, does not negate the need for a future bodily resurrection. In Ephesians 2:6, Paul even speaks of believers being “seated with Christ in the heavenly places,” a status that is theologically real but not yet physically experienced. This paradox is further evident in 1 Corinthians 15:20–28, where Christ is described as the “firstfruits” of the resurrection, with the assurance that His victory will ultimately be extended to all believers. The entire Christian life, therefore, is situated between what has already been secured in Christ and what remains to be fulfilled at His second coming²¹. Thus, Believers live in the tension of being spiritually united with Christ now, while awaiting full resurrection glory. The Christian life stands between what Christ has already secured and what will be fully revealed at His return.

The Book of Revelation reinforces this eschatological duality. Christ is already described as “the ruler of the kings of the earth” (Rev. 1:5), yet the narrative anticipates His final triumph over evil and the unveiling of a new heaven and new earth (Rev. 21:1–5). This vision provides the Church with both assurance and anticipation—a present hope grounded in Christ’s triumph, and a future hope looking toward the final restoration of all things.

Theologically, this framework has been championed by several major scholars. George Eldon Ladd is perhaps the most influential voice articulating this view. In his seminal work *The Presence of the Future*, Ladd contends that the Kingdom is

²¹ Heinrich Quistorp, “Calvin’s Doctrine of the Last Things” (ISD, 2024).

both a present spiritual reality and a future cosmic reign. He argues that *fulfillment without consummation is the essence of New Testament eschatology*, highlighting the tension between realized and future redemption²². In summary, Ladd's view captures the heart of New Testament eschatology: the Kingdom is both present and future, with redemption begun in Christ yet awaiting its full consummation.

Hoekema, writing from a Reformed perspective, affirms a similar view. In *The Bible and the Future*, he explains that believers already possess the benefits of salvation—including justification, sanctification, and eternal life—but they await their full manifestation in the resurrection and glorification²³. His work *bridges* biblical theology and systematic theology, showing how eschatology influences every dimension of Christian doctrine. Furthermore, Wright adds further depth by emphasizing the resurrection as the turning point of history. In *Surprised by Hope*, Wright critiques escapist notions of heaven and insists that God's future has already begun in Christ's resurrection²⁴. He writes that believers are called to live as *agents of new creation*, participating in God's mission to renew the world. For Wright, the Church stands at the crossroads of two ages, empowered by the Spirit to embody the Kingdom in its present form while looking forward to its final consummation.

To summarize, the biblical narrative, supported by the theological insights of major scholars, confirms that the Christian faith is situated between two epochs:

²² Ladd, *The Presence of the Future: The Eschatology of Biblical Realism*.

²³ Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future*.

²⁴ Nicholas Thomas Wright, *Creation, Power, and Truth: The Gospel in a World of Cultural Confusion* (Michigan: Zondervan, 2025).

the present age, where Christ has *inaugurated* the Kingdom, and the age to come, when He will bring it to *completion*. This eschatological tension calls the Church to live faithfully in hope, to embody the realities of redemption now, and to anticipate the final consummation with confidence and joy.

Theological Implications of Inaugurated Eschatology for the Church's Identity and Mission

The doctrine of inaugurated eschatology, often summarized by the phrase "*already and not yet*," asserts that the Kingdom of God has been inaugurated through the first coming of Christ but awaits its consummation at His return. This theological framework, while deeply rooted in biblical revelation, has profound implications for how the Church understands her identity and lives out her mission in the present age. Living between the resurrection and the parousia, the Church exists in the overlap of two ages-called to be a community of the future amid the present world.

Theologically, this eschatological tension shapes the Church's self-understanding. According to George Eldon Ladd, the Kingdom is both a present spiritual reality and a future visible reign. The Church, then, is the community in which that reality is manifest on earth. As Ladd explains, *The Church is not the Kingdom, but it is the instrument of the Kingdom; it is the custodial bearer of the*

*Kingdom's presence in the world*²⁵. This means the Church embodies and reflects the presence of God's reign now, even though the full transformation of creation is still to come.

One of the core implications of this understanding is that the Church lives as a "pilgrim people" - redeemed, but still awaiting final redemption (Rom. 8:23). The Church is both holy and still being sanctified, already reconciled to God but longing for the full realization of that reconciliation in the renewal of all things²⁶. As Anthony A. Hoekema argues, believers already experience the benefits of the Kingdom-such as justification and new life-while still awaiting glorification and resurrection²⁷. This dual reality calls the Church to a posture of hopeful tension, resisting both triumphalism and despair. Triumphalism ignores the "not yet," assuming that full victory has already been achieved, while despair overlooks the "already," denying the power of Christ's resurrection in the present.

In terms of ecclesiology, inaugurated eschatology fosters a dynamic and missional identity. The Church is not merely a gathering of individuals preparing for heaven, but a sign, instrument, and foretaste of the coming Kingdom. As N. T. Wright states, *The Church is called to be a colony of heaven, not by escaping the world, but by living in it in a way that anticipates its transformation*²⁸. The Church,

²⁵ Ladd, *The Presence of the Future: The Eschatology of Biblical Realism*.

²⁶ Pavel Hoffman, "The Centrality of the Holy Spirit in God's Grand Acts of Creation, Reconciliation, Renewal and Fulfilment: The Kingdom of God and Culture" (University of South Africa (South Africa), 2024).

²⁷ Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future*.

²⁸ Wright, *Creation, Power, and Truth: The Gospel in a World of Cultural Confusion*.

therefore, participates in God's mission by embodying Kingdom values—justice, mercy, reconciliation, and sacrificial love—in a broken and unjust world.

This vision also redefines Christian mission. Evangelism and social engagement are not separate tasks but unified expressions of the Kingdom's presence. As the Church proclaims the good news of salvation, it simultaneously works for the transformation of communities and cultures, bearing witness to the holistic nature of God's redemptive plan. Knoetze emphasizes this point by stating that *the Church does not have a mission; rather, the Church is mission*²⁹. In other words, mission is not a program the Church undertakes—it is the Church's very existence as a sent people within the world.

Moreover, the Church's worship is shaped by eschatological awareness. Corporate worship becomes both remembrance and anticipation—remembering Christ's redemptive work and anticipating His return. The sacraments, particularly the Lord's Supper, embody this tension. As Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 11:26, "As often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes." Worship, therefore, is not escapist but formative; it trains the Church to live in the "already" with an eye toward the "not yet."

Inaugurated eschatology also provides the Church with a resilient hope³⁰. In the face of suffering, injustice, and death, the Church does not deny present realities

²⁹ Johannes J Knoetze, "The Nicene Creed, the Church, and Christian Mission: A Creative Tension," *International Review of Mission* 113, no. 2 (2024): 311–23.

³⁰ Javier M Torres-Chinea, "Hope as a Source to Strengthen Chaplain Resiliency in the Christian and Missionary Alliance," 2025.

but confronts them with the assurance that the future has already been secured in Christ. The resurrection of Jesus is not only a past event but the firstfruits of the new creation (1 Cor. 15:20). As such, Christian hope is not wishful thinking but a confident expectation rooted in God's faithfulness.

Finally, this eschatological framework fosters ethical urgency. Knowing that the Kingdom has broken in, believers are called to align their lives with its reality. As Stanley Grenz writes, *To live eschatologically is to live according to the values of the coming Kingdom here and now*³¹. In this way, the Church becomes a prophetic community—living out the future in the present and challenging the world to see what it means to live under God's rule.

In conclusion, inaugurated eschatology reshapes the Church's identity as a community of the risen Christ and reorients its mission as a sign and agent of the Kingdom. Living between the times, the Church is called to embody the reality of redemption already inaugurated in Christ while pointing forward to its final consummation. This dual focus equips the Church to live faithfully, worship meaningfully, and engage the world with transformative hope.

Eschatological Hope and Christian Ethics: Living Faithfully Between the Times

³¹ Stanley J Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (London: Regent College Publishing, 2000).

Christian ethics does not exist in a vacuum. It is deeply rooted in the story of redemption and finds its orientation within the eschatological vision of Scripture. One of the most profound frameworks for understanding Christian ethical living is the eschatological paradigm of the "*already and not yet*." This concept, central to inaugurated eschatology, teaches that God's Kingdom has already broken into the present through Christ's first coming, yet its fullness remains future³². This tension shapes not only the Church's theology but also how Christians are to live in the world-with hope, responsibility, and faithfulness between the times.

In Christian theology, the concept of eschatology is not merely a matter of future speculation but deeply interwoven with present Christian life. The framework known as inaugurated eschatology, encapsulated in the phrase "*already and not yet*," offers one of the most significant contributions to Christian ethics in the modern theological landscape³³. It maintains that God's Kingdom has already been inaugurated through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and yet, its consummation remains a future reality awaiting His return. This dual reality of the Christian existence-securely anchored in what Christ has already accomplished and oriented toward what He will ultimately fulfill-carries profound ethical implications for how believers are to live "between the times."

³² A Christopher Smith, "The Eschatological Drive of God's Mission," *Review & Expositor* 82, no. 2 (2005): 209–16.

³³ Douglas C Youvan, "Between Hope and Resignation: Re-Examining the Evangelical Obsession with Doomsday in Light of Global Crises," 2024.

The resurrection of Jesus stands at the heart of this theological tension. It is not only a past event that confirms Jesus' messianic identity, but also the beginning of a new creation. As Paul affirms in 1 Corinthians 15:20, Christ has been raised from the dead as "the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep," pointing to the certainty of a future resurrection for all who belong to Him³⁴. Through this, the future has broken into the present. Christians now live in a world where the decisive triumph over sin and death has already been won, though the full effects of that victory are not yet universally manifest. It is within this "*already and not yet*" horizon that Christian ethics takes shape-not simply as a code of conduct, but as an eschatologically infused vocation.

Eschatological hope, then, is not escapist optimism but a transformative force shaping the believer's daily life. Hoekema notes that the believer "experiences the blessings of the age to come, while also battling with the realities of the present evil age."³⁵ Such tension demands an ethic that is neither withdrawn from the world nor conformed to it. Rather, Christians are summoned to live as signs of the coming Kingdom-imperfect, yes, but authentically witnessing to a reality greater than the present age can offer. Hope becomes more than a theological virtue; it is the engine of ethical endurance, inspiring patience in suffering, justice in action, and holiness in conduct.

³⁴ Keri A Thompson, "The Apostle Paul's Teaching on Life After Death: A Model of Christ's Life, Death, and Resurrection," 2024. 92

³⁵ Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future*.

The teachings of Jesus provide the clearest window into the relationship between eschatological vision and ethical demand. The *Sermon on the Mount* (Matthew 5-7) unveils a radical Kingdom ethic that is both grounded in the present experience of God's reign and anticipatory of its final revelation. The commands to love enemies, pursue peace, and practice righteousness are not impossible ideals for a distant heaven; rather, they are invitations to participate in the Kingdom now, by living according to the values of the age to come. As Wright affirms, these ethics are not simply rules to follow, but "signs that God's new world has already begun."³⁶ Christian obedience, in this light, is not legalistic conformity but eschatological performance—an embodied anticipation of a promised reality.

This eschatological ethic is also vividly expressed in the apostolic writings, where Paul calls believers to live as "new creations" (2 Cor. 5:17), transformed by the renewing of their minds (Rom. 12:2), and clothed with the virtues of Christ (Col. 3:12–17)³⁷. These exhortations are not abstract moralism; they are rooted in the reality that the old age is passing away, and the new has already begun in Christ. Paul reminds the Romans that "the night is far gone, the day is at hand" (Rom. 13:12), urging them to cast off the works of darkness and walk in the light of the coming Kingdom. This ethical summons reflects the deep conviction that Christian living is shaped by the future, not merely the past.

³⁶ N.T Wright, *Following Jesus: Biblical Reflections on Discipleship* (Grand Rapids: Eerdsman, 1995).

³⁷ Steve Ransome, "Paul's Transformation and How It Has Shaped His Christology and Pneumatology," 2019.

More than personal piety, eschatological ethics includes social and communal dimensions. If the Church is the foretaste of the Kingdom, then it must be a community marked by reconciliation, hospitality, justice, and compassion. Christian ethics is not only about making moral choices, but also about witnessing to a new way of being human in a world still caught in the brokenness of sin. As Michal Valco insists, the Church is to be a people who embody a narrative-the narrative of God's redemption-and who learn to see the world truthfully through the lens of that story³⁸. Living ethically between the times, therefore, requires a prophetic imagination: the ability to envision and enact God's promised future in the present.

Thus, eschatological hope is not detached from the ethical life but integral to it. Christians live between what is already true in Christ and what is not yet fully seen. This tension is not a hindrance but a holy summons-a call to faithfulness, to love, to justice, and patient endurance. Living between the times, the Church becomes not only the bearer of hope but also the embodiment of that hope in a watching world. To live ethically in the light of eschatology is to live with the risen Christ at the center, the Kingdom of God as the horizon, and the Spirit of God as the power for transformation.

³⁸ Michal Valčo, "The Role of the Church in a 'Post-Narratable World': Bringing Meaning to Reality through a Credible Narrative," *Church and Society: Towards Responsible Engagement*, 2015, 270-84.

Concluding remark

Eschatological hope in Christian theology is not simply a doctrinal appendix concerning the end times; it is the very pulse of Christian identity and ethics. Rooted in the inaugurated Kingdom of God, the believer's moral life unfolds within the tension of the "*already and not yet*." Christ has already come, conquered sin and death through His resurrection, and ushered in the new creation. Yet, the fullness of this Kingdom awaits future consummation at His return. This in-between reality reorients Christian ethics away from legalism or mere moralism and into a dynamic, hopeful participation in God's unfolding redemptive story.

At the heart of this eschatological tension stands the resurrection of Jesus Christ, which serves not only as a historical vindication of His mission but also as the firstfruits of the age to come. Paul's teachings demonstrate that this resurrection initiates a new way of life—one marked by transformation, holiness, and participation in the Spirit. Christians are no longer passive recipients of salvation but active witnesses of the coming Kingdom, called to embody in their personal and communal lives the values of the world to come.

Ethical living in this light is not driven by fear or rigid duty but by hope-filled anticipation. As Anthony Hoekema reminds us, believers live amid both the blessings of the age to come and the afflictions of the present evil age. This paradox does not paralyze but propels Christian discipleship. Christians are called to faithful presence—not escaping the world but engaging it with Kingdom-shaped love,

justice, and mercy. The future is not simply awaited; it is rehearsed through acts of forgiveness, hospitality, nonviolence, and generosity that point toward the ultimate renewal of all things.

Jesus' teachings, especially in the *Sermon on the Mount*, offer a revolutionary ethic that challenges the status quo and demands a Kingdom imagination. The ethics of Jesus are not utopian ideals to be postponed until heaven but imperatives grounded in the reality that *God's reign has already begun*. As Nicholas T. Wright emphasizes, ethical obedience becomes a form of Kingdom performance—a public and communal testimony to what is ultimately true in Christ.

Moreover, the Church itself becomes a foretaste of the *eschaton*, a sign and instrument of God's purposes in the world. Through Spirit-formed worship, Eucharistic remembrance, and prophetic witness, the Church embodies the story it proclaims. Eschatological ethics, then, is not simply about individual behavior but about communal identity shaped by hope. The Church becomes a visible, albeit imperfect, glimpse of the coming Kingdom—called to live now as it will be then.

In this way, Christian ethics becomes a response to God's future, lived out with courage, patience, and prophetic clarity in the present. The "*already and not yet*" is not merely a theological phrase but a summons to faithful living between the times. Eschatological hope compels believers not to withdraw but to advance into the world, bearing the fruit of the Spirit and the light of the resurrection. It is hope,

grounded in Christ and oriented toward His return (soon), that energizes and sustains Christian ethics in every age.

References

- Bourgine, Benoît. “The Theology of Grace According to the Pauline Corpus.” *Transdisciplinary Approaches on Reconciliation Research*, 2024, 59.
- Bredenhof, Reuben M. “The Kingdom of God in Jesus and Paul,” n.d.
- Carter, Kara. “God’s Story, Our Story: Telling, Re-Telling, Re-Storying,” 2022.
- Cullmann, Oscar. *Christ and Time: The Primitive Christian Conception of Time and History*. Rev. Ed. Rev. ed. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964.
- Davis, Rebecca. “Inaugurated Eschatology and Corporate Worship: God’s Kingdom Breaks In.” In *Presented at Wesleyan Liturgical Society Meeting*, 2019.
- Fee, Gordon D. *New Testament Exegesis: A Handbook for Students and Pastors, 3rd Ed.* 3rd ed. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002.
- Grenz, Stanley J. *Theology for the Community of God*. London: Regent College Publishing, 2000.
- Henrikson, Donald. “The Church Polity of Progressive Covenantalism in Light of the Body of Christ Metaphor.” *Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary*, 2022.
- Hoekema, Anthony A. *The Bible and the Future*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdsman, 1979.
- Hoffman, Pavel. “The Centrality of the Holy Spirit in God’s Grand Acts of Creation, Reconciliation, Renewal and Fulfilment: The Kingdom of God and Culture.” *University of South Africa (South Africa)*, 2024.
- Humphrey, Edith M. “New Creation in the Christian Scriptures and Tradition’.” *St Andrews Encyclopaedia of Theology*, 2024.
- Kaiser, Walter C., Jr. *Kaiser, Walter C., Jr. Mission in the Old Testament: Israel as a Light to the Nations*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2000.
- Kariatlis, Philip. “The Nature and Mission of the Church: Anticipation and Realisation of God’s Eternal Kingdom.” *Phronema* 39, no. 1 (2024).
- Kim, Myungwoo. “The Consistency of the Kingdom of God Through Israel’s Unconditional Covenants,” 2022.
- Knaus, Samuel Arthur. “Essential Groaning: The Resurrection Hope of Romans 8: 18–25 and 2 Corinthians 4: 7–5: 10 Against Word of Faith Theology.” *Liberty University*, 2024.
- Knoetze, Johannes J. “The Nicene Creed, the Church, and Christian Mission: A Creative Tension.” *International Review of Mission* 113, no. 2 (2024): 311–23.
- Ladd, George Eldon. *The Presence of the Future: The Eschatology of Biblical Realism*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdsman, 1974.

- Menn, Jonathan M, and Equipping Church Leaders East Africa. “MARK—PART,” 2021.
- Miller, Charles D T. “An Analysis of Paul’s Argument for the Nature of the Resurrection Body in I Corinthians 15,” n.d.
- Millsap, Patrick S. “Toward an Understanding of the Cross-Dimensional Phenomenon of Emergent Eschatological Informing.” Regent University, 2024.
- Quistorp, Heinrich. “Calvin’s Doctrine of the Last Things.” ISD, 2024.
- Ransome, Steve. “Paul’s Transformation and How It Has Shaped His Christology and Pneumatology,” 2019.
- Schreiner, Thomas R. *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ*. Louisville, KY: Baker Academic, 2008.
- Smith, A Christopher. “The Eschatological Drive of God’s Mission.” *Review & Expositor* 82, no. 2 (2005): 209–16.
- Smith, Leonard S. “Formulating A Righteous Ecclesiology,” 2024.
- Thompson, Keri A. “The Apostle Paul’s Teaching on Life After Death: A Model of Christ’s Life, Death, and Resurrection,” 2024.
- Torres-Chinea, Javier M. “Hope as a Source to Strengthen Chaplain Resiliency in the Christian and Missionary Alliance,” 2025.
- Valčo, Michal. “The Role of the Church in a ‘Post-Narratable World’: Bringing Meaning to Reality through a Credible Narrative.” *Church and Society: Towards Responsible Engagement*, 2015, 270–84.
- Wright, N.T. *Following Jesus: Biblical Reflections on Discipleship*. Grand Rapids: Eerdsman, 1995.
- Wright, Nicholas Thomas. *Creation, Power, and Truth: The Gospel in a World of Cultural Confusion*. Michigan: Zondervan, 2025.
- Youvan, Douglas C. “Between Hope and Resignation: Re-Examining the Evangelical Obsession with Doomsday in Light of Global Crises,” 2024.

Short biography of authors:

Alexander Situmorang, teaches at Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Providensia, Batu, Jawa Timur; he can reached at email: alexanderstmorang62@gmail.com

Elis Louisa Ay, teaches at Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Providensia, Batu, Jawa Timur; she can reached at email: elis.louisa@gmail.com