

The Time Periods for Salvation

**by C. Gary Reid
and
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Dear Associates, Students and Friends:

This month's article continues the subject matter from the pair of articles, Part 1 for November 2004 and Part 2 for December 2004. However, the article "[The Doctrine of the Ages in the Bible](#)" is separate and updated from the other two articles.

In 1999 Dr. Heleen M. Keizer published her Ph.D. dissertation in book form, *Life, Time, Entirety: A Study of ΑΙΩΝ in Greek Literature and Philosophy and Philo* (Universiteit van Amsterdam, 1999). In her study Dr. Keizer researched the Hebrew term *olam*, and every instance of the Greek terms *aion*, and *aionios* in extant Greek writings. She was able to do this through a collection of materials called "Thesaurus Linguae Graecae." Dr. Keizer was the first person to do such a complete survey of *aion*, and *aionios*. [1](#)

In the non-biblical usage, Dr. Keizer notes three distinct meanings of *aion*: (1) "life," (2) "time," and (3) "entirety," or a wholeness or completeness or a totality relating to a function of time. (Hence the title of her study.) She notes that the biblical *aion* is a creation of God (having no divinity, as pagan philosophy put forth). Her study found that neither Philo, nor later Church Fathers use *aion* to refer to the eternity of God. [2](#) Dr. Keizer pointed out some conclusions regarding the usage and meaning of *aion* in the New Testament: [3](#)

"Of decisive importance is the new usage of *aion* found in the New Testament, where we hear Christ speaking of 'this (present) *aion*,' 'the end of this *aion*,' and 'the coming (future) *aion*.' ... To speak of 'this *aion*,' its 'end' and 'the *aion* to come' clearly lends to *aion* the meaning of a limited time. But at this point our findings with regard to the Old Testament meaning of *olam/aion* can be supportive and supported. The New Testament indicates that 'this' and the 'coming' *aion* are not simply successive 'ages' or 'periods': the coming *aion*, as a restored, reborn world, will in the future completely *replace* the present one, while as a new 'horizon' of life it is also present already now."

- Keizer, *Life, Time, Entirety*, pp. 251–252, emphasis mine

She notes further that:

"The biblical usage of *aion* led me to the conclusion that the word refers to a 'whole' or 'entirety' of time (also *the* 'whole'/'entirety' of time), the beginning and end of which we cannot 'see' or 'define', although we *know* that there is a beginning and also an end. I believe that the comparison with a 'horizon' is helpful. Maybe the most important conclusion is that *aion* designates an aspect of creation (not a property of God as He is in Himself), viz. the temporal aspect. And it is the Creator who has decided and decides beginning, end, and without-end of his creation."

- Keizer, personal correspondence, December 17, 2004

Another member of this notable Dutch family, Reitze Keizer (brother of Dr. Keizer), has created his own excellent PowerPoint presentation using Dr. Martin's evidence about the location of the Jerusalem Temples. He sent me this most appropriate quote from one of the greatest scientists who ever lived. Let us pray that these sentiments come to pass in all of our collective work:

"About the time of the end, a body of men will be raised up who will turn their attention to the Prophecies, and insist upon their literal interpretation, in the midst of much clamor and opposition."

- Sir Isaac Newton, 1642–1727

Development of “Eternity”

How did the words *olam* in Hebrew, and *aion* and *aionios* in Greek, transform into the theological concept of “eternity,” “eternal,” and “everlasting”? The answer is understandable but somewhat involved. In simple terms the answer is that pagan Greek and Babylonian theological concepts were read into and applied to the biblical terms. Theology overcame biblical usage for the words.

Let me give one example. Justinian, Emperor of the Greek-speaking Byzantine Empire (527–565 C.E.), in an effort to suppress “Origenism” and the doctrine of universal reconciliation, issued an edict to Menno, Patriarch of Constantinople. Justinian wrote:

“The holy church of Christ teaches an endless aionios [*ateleutetos aionios*] life to the righteous, and endless [*ateleutetos*] punishment to the wicked.”

- **Quoted in Hanson, *The Greek Word AI ŌN–AIŌNIOS*, p. 74 [4](#)**

The fact that *aionios* needed to be explained by the Greek word *ateleutetos* (which is not in Scripture) is revealing. It was necessary because Justinian knew that *aionios* alone did not mean endless or eternal. This shows that *aionios* (the plural for *aion*) by itself does not mean eternity. Dr. Keizer made the same finding:

“Our study has led to the conclusion that infinity is not an intrinsic or necessary connotation of *aiōn*, either in the Greek or in the Biblical usage (*‘olām*).”

- **Keizer, *Life, Time, Entirety*, p. 244, emphasis mine**

The ages, the *aions* each have a beginning and an end, although we may not be able to see those limits.

Receipts

Once again, if you require a receipt for your 2004 contributions to ASK, please request it so that we may send a receipt to you. Unless you ask us, we will not send a receipt. This will be your last reminder. Receipts are like prayers to the extent that, if you do not ask, you will not receive. (And no, don’t carry that analogy too far.) We will mail you the receipt promptly.

Thank You

Your gifts and contributions allow us to carry on so that the meat of the Gospel continues to be presented around the world. Most of this material can be found nowhere else. We trust that you contribute to ASK because you find this material extremely valuable. You have our gratitude for your confidence in our efforts to produce the highest quality material from the archives of Dr. Ernest L. Martin’s studies since 1974. Your support allows us to persist in that endeavor. There is more to be presented and you make it all possible. Your support is greatly appreciated.

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¹ From the TLG website <http://www.tlg.uci.edu>: **“(TLG®) is a research center at the University of California, Irvine. Founded in 1972 the TLG has already collected and digitized most literary texts written in Greek from Homer to the fall of Byzantium in AD 1453. ... The web version currently provides access to 3,700 authors and 12,000 works, approximately 91 million words.”** (emphasis is mine). The TLG is available for purchase on CD or for public use over the internet for a subscription fee.

Dr. Keizer believes she was the first to use TLG to conduct a comprehensive analysis of *aion* and *aionios* through the time of the Early Church Fathers (Heleen Keizer, personal correspondence, December 17, 2004). However, the subject of her Ph.D. dissertation and book was necessarily limited to those terms as used in the Bible, Septuagint and the works of Philo of Alexandria. Dr. Keizer noted that her dissertation topic was influenced by the studying and writing of the subject by her father, Dr. Andrew Keizer (a long-time colleague and promoter of Dr. Martin's writings and ASK in the Netherlands). *DWS*

- [2](#) Keizer cites the article "*aion*" in G.W.H. Lampe, ed., *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961). *DWS*
- [3](#) Keizer, personal correspondence, December 17, 2004. *DWS*
- [4](#) John Wesley Hanson, *The Greek Word ΑΙΩΝ-ΑΙΩΝΙΟΣ, Translated Everlasting-Eternal in the Holy Bible, Shown to Denote Limited Duration* (Chicago: Northwestern Universalist Publ. House, 1875, reprint by Concordant Publ. Concern, 2001), P. 74

The Time Periods for Salvation, Part 1

by C. Gary Reid and Ernest L. Martin, Ph.D., 1975
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“Behold now is the day of salvation”

- **2 Corinthians 6:2**

There can be no doubt that our period is a time for salvation. People were also saved in the time of the Apostles. And many people have since become Christians. Yet in spite of what appears to be a great number of people presently responding to the call of God, Christians today only represent a tiny minority of the earth’s population. Throughout history, and even in our own time, it is obvious that the vast majority of peoples who have lived on earth have not heard the message of Christ. To be a Christian one must express the faith of Christ, appropriate the efficacy of His cross for the forgiveness of sins, and actively trust in Christ’s mediatorial role in one’s life. The fact is, however, millions of people — even billions — have expressed no faith at all in Christ. If this is the only time for salvation, these people must, of necessity, be lost forever. This would be an inescapable conclusion. Thankfully, the Bible shows this not to be the case. There are actually time periods which God uses to grant salvation to men. God will not be a respecter of persons in the ultimate sense.

“Who [God] will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus: Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time [Greek: “in its own time periods”].”

- **Timothy 2:4–6**

Notice the last part of that scripture: **“in its own time periods.”** Christ gave Himself as a ransom for all men, but the testimony, or the witnessing, of that ransom will only be manifest **“in its own time periods”** (verse 6).

Professor Wuest in his Expanded Translation ¹ of 1 Timothy 2:6, shows the full intent of what Paul meant. **“Who [Christ] gave himself a ransom on behalf of all, the testimony of which was to be given in His own strategic seasons.”** The actual Greek of the text has plain, but profound teaching. Paul, in a dogmatic way, shows that Christ would become a testimony to all men, but only in certain time periods which belong particularly to Him. God is in control. He will disclose His full plan of salvation for men during certain strategic periods which are within God’s superintendence.

At the present time, God is only calling an elect few to salvation. **“There is a remnant [just a few] according to the election of grace”** (Romans 11:5). Though only a small number are now responding, all the descendants of the house of Israel are elected to receive finally the full blessing of salvation. **“As touching the election, they [Israel] are beloved for the fathers’ sake”** (Romans 11:28). In the future, Paul said:

“All Israel shall be saved: as it is written, ‘There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: for this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.’”

- **Romans 11:26–27²**

All Israel will one day be saved. This is the promise of the Almighty God, and it will be fulfilled! **“For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance”** (Romans 11:29). ³ When God makes a promise, He keeps it!

It is not only the nation of Israel who is destined to be saved. Salvation will be offered to all men — no matter of what race they belong. As quoted before, Paul said that God **“will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth ... in His own strategic seasons.”** It is God who has determined what those time periods for salvation are. They are **“His own strategic seasons,”** not those designed by men.

In the final time period of salvation — when the fullness of time has finally come to fruition — we are told that God will gather unto Himself not only men on earth into the scope of His grace, but His plan involves the entirety of the universe.

“Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: that in the DISPENSATION of the fullness of times [the final dispensation of those strategic time periods for salvation] he might gather together in one ALL THINGS in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him”

- **Ephesians 1:9–10**

This scripture, plus many more, shows that in the last dispensation of God’s selected time periods there will be a gathering together of all to God. Really, the purpose of God as revealed in the Bible is to redeem the universe into a harmony with Himself. This will be accomplished within certain definite and predetermined periods of time.

What we hope to do in this study is to show those various periods which God has selected for redemption. They are found in the Bible. It must be pointed out however, that the knowledge of those special eras are often hidden from the English reader by imprecise biblical translations. What we will attempt to do is to bring the original words of the inspired writers to your attention. This subject is one of the most interesting and inspiring teachings of the Bible. We will see from the Bible the revelation of God’s divine plan, in its various stages, for the redemption of humanity and the universe to Himself. There is nothing more rewarding and uplifting than the knowledge of this biblical truth.

The Secret Time Periods of God

Time is an elusive quantity. For some there never seems to be enough time in the day to accomplish all that is important. The older we get, the faster time seems to pass. Every tick of our watch and beat of our heart brings us one step closer to our death. Life can appear quite hopeless unless God has an overall plan for His creation that He is busy bringing to fruition.

“To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: a time to be born and a time to die ... He has made everything beautiful in his time: also he has set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God makes from the beginning to the end.”

- **Ecclesiastes 3:11**

The word “world” in the above passage is from the Hebrew word *olam*. It really means “an age.” Mankind of himself cannot find out information about the beginning of our present age nor can he know anything of its conclusion. If we, of ourselves, are incapable of understanding important facts regarding our own age, how can we possibly know about all the ages of God which He has planned for the redemption of man? We cannot — of ourselves. But an inspired writer said, **“The secret things belong unto the Lord our God”** (Deuteronomy 29:29).

The reason for our lives, the times we were born, why we have been given our physical endowments and emotional characteristics, may not be within the compass of man's mind to understand, but God can and does know. Man must have divine revelation to find the answers to these vital questions. This is why the remainder of Deuteronomy 29:29 says, **“but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever (Hebrew: for the age).”**

We can know what our age is all about, if God will give us that knowledge. That essential understanding He has given in the Holy Bible. Not only has He shown where our own age fits into His plan of salvation, He also tells us of former ages and future ones which He has placed within His jurisdiction. This booklet is designed to show the various ages, or strategic time periods, in which God has determined man to live and to find redemption.

“But as it is written, eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love him. But God has revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searches all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knows no man, but [by] the Spirit of God.”

- **1 Corinthians 2:9–11**

We can safely conclude from the foregoing passages that God is actively involved in a work for the benefit of man. With the aid of God's Holy Spirit we can come to an understanding of those secret plans of God. Paul explains that this knowledge of grace was extended to him in his ministry to the Gentiles:

“Unto me, the less than least of all saints was given this favor: unto the nations to announce the glad-message of the untraceable riches of the Christ, and to bring to light what is the administration of the sacred secret which had been hidden away from the ages in God who did all things create: in order that now unto the principalities and the authorities in the heavenlies might be made known through means of the assembly the manifold wisdom of God, according to a plan of the ages which he made in the anointed Jesus our Lord.”

- **Ephesians 3:8–11, Rotherham Version**

This writing of Paul mentions God's **“plan of the ages”** — a plan made in Christ Jesus — a plan which Paul called the sacred secret which had been **“hidden away”** from the natural mind of man. That “secret” or mystery was made known to the Apostle Paul and other Apostles.

“How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery ... which in other ages [generations] was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.”

- **Ephesians 3:3, 5**

God's plan for the universe is now laid bare. He has revealed it through His word, the Bible. Let us now look to the Holy Scripture for the knowledge of that revelation which God has now given to His people.

God's Plan of the Ages

As will be shown in this article, God is working out His plan of redemption during periods of time called **“His own strategic seasons.”** In association with these seasons, the Scriptures also speak about **“the ages of God.”** Unfortunately the real knowledge about God's plan has been hidden from us partly through imprecise Bible translations. The concept of **“the ages”** (God's strategic seasons) is clearly taught in the original languages of the Old and New Testaments, but the

mistaken ideas concerning life and death by philosophers and theologians of the recent past have often clouded the real teachings of God by the giving of wrong English renderings of the original teachings of scripture. This is not always the case, but many times it is.

Even our beloved King James Version suffers in this way. This is especially true in regard to the subject we now enter. The theologians who translated the Bible may have meant well in what they were doing, but by “hiding” the biblical teachings of **“the ages”** through wrong interpretation, they have helped to obscure the very secret which God was disclosing to the world concerning “His own strategic seasons” for salvation.

To recover the truth about God’s periods in which He works with man for his salvation, it is essential to bypass those improper translations and to understand the original Hebrew and Greek words used by the writers of the Bible as they were inspired by God’s Holy Spirit. Fortunately, there are a few modern versions of the Bible that properly translate passages which illumine God’s plan of the ages. A reference to these Versions (or a reference to the original languages) will help the English reader to better understand what God has revealed. One such translation is that by Joseph Rotherham. ⁴ In this booklet, we will refer to his translation throughout. Let us now begin our study of God’s plan of the ages.

The Ages in the Old Testament

The ages as revealed in the original languages of the scriptures have been clouded by the translation process. Theological doctrines developed in the later centuries of our modern era are generally responsible for the erroneous translations of some Versions. But let us resort to the original languages of scripture and see the proper translations of important words dealing with **“the ages.”** The Hebrew word normally associated with our English word “age” or “ages” is *olam*. Let us pay attention to this word.

The Hebrew Olam

The word *olam* is derived from the primitive root *alam*, meaning to veil from sight, to conceal. An analysis of the passages where *olam* appears shows clearly that the word does not express “eternity” or “everlasting” as it has been frequently translated in the King James Version. Rather, it simply expresses a duration, a time during which a person, thing, or state of a thing exists — literally an age of time which has a definite beginning and conclusion. The duration of an age in scripture is sometimes defined and sometimes undefined. ⁵

Olam, including its usage in the singular and plural and with prepositions and negatives, is translated differently in the Old Testament of our English Version. These various translations with their number of occurrences are tabulated below:

“for ever and ever”	24 times
“from everlasting to everlasting”	4 times
“for ever”	251 times
“everlasting”	60 times
“of ancient times” or “of old time”	2 times
“of old” or “ever of old”	16 times
“world without end”	1 time
“never”	16 times
“perpetual”	22 times
“evermore”	15 times
“old” or “ancient”	13 times
“of” or “in old time”	3 times
“always” or “alway”	5 times
“anymore”	2 times
“world”	2 times

“continuance”	1 time
“eternal”	1 time
“lasting”	1 time
“long time”	1 time
“at any time”	1 time
“since the beginning of the world”	1 time
“ever”	4 times
“long”	2 times

Total occurrences of *olam* 448 times

If the word *olam* really signified “eternal” then there are some major mistranslations of the word, as the above table shows. The truth is, the word *olam*, translated **“for ever,” “everlasting,” “perpetual,”** etc., is really not an equivalent of those English words. Problems arise when words expressing “eternity” are used for the Hebrew word *olam*. Notice some of them.

When *olam* is associated with persons it generally expresses only their lifetime. It does not mean a type of “eternity” which is indicated by the term “forever.”

“Then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an aul; and he shall serve him for ever [*olam*].”

- **Exodus 21:6, also Deuteronomy 15:17**

Certainly the Hebrew servant whose ear was pierced was not intended to become a bondman for all eternity, but rather only for his own lifetime or the lifetime of his master. Rotherham renders the actual Hebrew meaning in a proper way.

“And his lord shall pierce his ear with an aul, so shall he serve him all his life.”

- **Exodus 21:6**

The *olam* of this man’s servitude began with the boring of his ear, and that *olam* ended with his death. There was a beginning and an ending to the *olam* of the slave. Going on, look at another illustration. In Nehemiah 13:1, the congregation read in the law of Moses that neither an Ammonite nor Moabite should enter into the congregation of God **“for ever.”** But a reference in Deuteronomy 23:36 reveals that this so-called “eternity” [*olam*] is limited to the lifetime of ten generations.

Also, the term “for ever” [*olam*] in 1 Chronicles 22:10 covers only the forty years of Solomon’s reign. The *olam* in 1 Kings 8:13 and 9:3 was restricted only to the time while the physical temple was in existence. Even the translators of the King James Version found it impossible to render *olam* by the idea of endlessness. Referring it to man, they were forced to use other terms such as:

- **“ancient”** (Proverbs 22:28; Jeremiah 5:15),
- **“long”** (Psalm 143:3),
- **“old time”** (Joshua 24:2),
- **“the beginning of the world”** (Isaiah 64:4), et al.

The King James translators also have Jonah saying he was in the belly of the fish **“for ever [*olam*]”** (Jonah 2:6), but the text itself shows that the *olam* associated with Jonah was only a period of three days and nights (1:17). Rotherham translates Jonah as actually saying: **“As for the earth her bars were about me age-abidingly.”** Only an “age” was being discussed in the original scripture, and in Jonah’s case that “age,” with its beginning and end, lasted only three days. This means an “age” could be relatively short lived. It can, however, refer to a longer time, such as the

lifetime of a man, and even longer. But one thing must be understood: An “age” always has a beginning and an end. It is certainly not an “eternity,” nor is it “forever” — always without end. It is important to keep this concept in mind when dealing with the *olams* [or ages] of the Bible. The truth of God’s divine plan of the ages will make sense if we do.

Olam and the Divine Promises

As startling as it may seem, the idea of endlessness does not apply even when *olam* is associated with the Divine decrees or promises.

“And he built his sanctuary like high places, like the earth which he has established for ever.”

• **Psalm 78:69**

“One generation passes away, and another generation comes: but the earth abides for ever.”

Ecclesiastes 1:4

These scriptures seem to imply that the present earth will exist for all time — that it will never be removed or destroyed. But the Bible itself tells us in other contexts that the earth is decaying and that it is in a state of corruption (Romans 8:20–22). The earth is waxing old like a garment which gets progressively old and then wears out (Hebrews 1:10–12).⁶ Indeed, the present earth will come to an end and a new one must be created. This earth will not last forever — even though some English translators render *olam* with the theme of everlastingness prevailing. But the teachings of scripture will not allow it.

“For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.”

• **Isaiah 65:17**

This scripture along with others (Psalm 102:25–26; Matthew 5:18, 24:35; 2 Peter 3:7–10) foretell the passing away of our present heaven and earth to make room for a New Heavens and a New Earth. Obviously, the **“for ever [olam],”** as it relates to this earth, is limited to the continuance of the present earth from its creation in Genesis to its dissolution in Revelation. It cannot mean an “eternity.” Rotherham was well aware of this fact. Notice his accurate translation of Ecclesiastes 1:4: **“Generation goes and generation comes, but the earth unto times age-abiding remains.”** Here we clearly see that our present earth remains only for an age-lasting time, not for eternity.

There are many other problems when *olam* is translated **“for ever.”** Jeremiah 5:22 declares that God has **“placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual [olam] decree.”** However, in the New Earth, **“there was no more sea”** (Revelation 21:1). The **“perpetual [olam]”** decree will become obsolete once the sea goes out of existence. Rotherham rightly translates its time as **“age-abiding.”** That decree lasts only for an age.

Jeremiah also says that God will cast off Israel from His presence and bring upon them an **“everlasting” [olam] reproach** (Jeremiah 23:39–40). But the reproach will have an end. This is clear from Jeremiah 24:6 because he states that God **“will bring them again to this land.”** See also Isaiah 25:8 and Romans 11:25,26. The Rotherham Version translates Jeremiah 23:40 correctly: **“and will give unto you reproach age-abiding, and disgrace age-abiding, which shall not be forgotten.”** Clearly the reproach and disgrace will last only for a specified time period until Israel is once again reestablished as God’s nation during the millennial period.

We also read that Jerusalem shall remain **“forever [olam]”** (Psalm 48:8; Isaiah 65:18; Jeremiah 17:25), and that God will make her an **“eternal [olam] excellency, a joy of many generations”** (Isaiah 60:15). Since the present Jerusalem will be displaced by the New Jerusalem (Revelation 3:12, 21:2), it is clear that “eternal” in that verse in Isaiah is equivalent only to **“many generations.”** That’s why Rotherham properly translates Jeremiah 17:25: **“And this city shall remain unto times age-abiding.”**

According to Ezekiel 37:26–28, God’s sanctuary will be set in the midst of Israel **“for evermore”** [for *olam*]. But, as the metropolis of the New Earth has “no temple” or sanctuary (Revelation 21:22), ⁷ **“for evermore”** expires the moment God makes all things new. If one would simply understand what the inspired authors actually wrote about these matters which were intended to last only for an age, much of the confusion would cease in regard to the time periods of the Bible and the biblical passages about the subject of time would not be contradictory.

Olam and the Old Covenant

The Old Covenant made with Israel (Exodus 20:24) is said to be an **“everlasting [olam] covenant”** (Leviticus 24:8). The feasts of the Lord given to Israel were said to be **“for ever [olam]”** (Leviticus 23:14, 21, 31, 41). However, it is well known that the covenant was contingent on Israel’s obedience (Exodus 19:5–6). Repeal for disobedience was possible. Jeremiah distinctly told of its being superseded by a new and better covenant (Jeremiah 31:31–34). The Old Covenant as well as the Sabbath day were only **“an age-abiding covenant”** (Leviticus 24:8, Rotherham). Such covenants were not to last “forever.”

The Old Covenant was clearly temporary, so also was the religious system of worship founded thereon. Though the Aaronic priesthood is called an **“everlasting [olam] priesthood”** (Exodus 40:15; Leviticus 6:18; Numbers 25:13), the New Testament foresaw a setting aside of the Levitical order with the appearance of a priest **“after the order of Melchizedek”** (Hebrews 7:11–13). Rotherham, in his Version, calls the Aaronic priesthood **“an age-abiding priesthood”** (Exodus 40:15). It was to last only for a certain time — it was not eternal!

With regard to sacrifices and Sabbaths which the King James Version states were to be observed **“for a statute for ever”** (Exodus 31:16–17; Leviticus 16:29–31; and 2 Chronicles 2:4), Paul plainly said they were **“carnal ordinances imposed on them until the time of the reformation”** (Hebrews 9:10). Paul knew those commands were only in force for a particular time — an age-abiding period. Paul knew what the actual Hebrew language said about the matter. He knew it had nothing to do with “eternity,” or else Paul’s New Testament statements are not true. But the impermanence of the Mosaic system is expressed in the Old Testament scriptures themselves which tell of their establishment and continuance. Priesthood, Sabbath and sacrifice were all for *olam* only **“throughout their generations”** (Exodus 27:21; 31:16–17; 40:15).

Generations come and go (Ecclesiastes 1:4). How do they come? By birth. How do they go? By death. When death is swallowed up in victory as promised in the Scripture (1 Corinthians 15:55–57), the coming and going of generations will cease. All ages have a beginning and an end. So did the age of sacrifice and temple. It came to an end for Christians. While it is true that in millennial times the ceremonial rituals may be temporarily reestablished and Feasts and New Moons and Sabbaths reappear (Isaiah 66:23; Zechariah 14:16), but in Revelation 21:22, we find no reference to altars, temples, priesthood, ritual, Sabbaths or Holy Days in the New Earth. They all come to an end with the old creation. They are already over for Christians. All these rituals were intended only for an age — an age-abiding period, but not for all eternity. The proper translations of the Bible make this very evident.

Olam and God’s Attributes

So far we should understand that *olam* and its various forms, though used in different ways, invariably denote periods of time which have beginnings and ends. Now let us consider those

scriptures where *olam* refers to God. Surely, God is the “eternal” God. True enough, God has continual existence, but the use of the word *olam* is, in itself, no proof of it. That evidence comes from other sources (see Hebrews 7:25).

Let us consider the quotation of Psalm 45:6 in the letter to the Hebrews:

“But unto the Son he says, ‘Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of your Kingdom.’”

- **Hebrews 1:8**

The theme under discussion is the Kingdom of the Son. That Kingdom seems to have an everlasting existence. But another scripture must bear on the same subject.

“Then comes the end, when he shall have delivered up the Kingdom to God, even the Father ... and when all things shall be subdued [subjected] unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto Him that put [did subject] all things under him, that God may be all in all.”

- **1 Corinthians 15:24, 28**

It is clear that the reign of the Son will have a conclusion even though the Kingdom will continue under the leadership of God the Father. The Kingdom itself will see no end (Luke 1:33), but at the last moment the Son delivers His Kingdom up to the Father and also subjects Himself to the Father. These scriptures show that **“forever and ever”** translated from the Hebrew *olam* in Psalm 45:6 and the Greek *aión* in Hebrews 1:8 both indicate the idea of a Kingdom having an indefinite duration with a precise end sometime in the future.

Elsewhere we read that His servants also **“shall reign forever and ever”** — for **“the ages of the ages”** (Revelation 22:5). Since 1 Corinthians 15:24 states that He shall put down (abolish) all rule, authority and power, the reign of His servants must necessarily end with the abolition of all rule, which includes the friendly (*i.e.*, that of the saints) as well as the hostile. The idea of having to rule is necessitated by the presence of self will and insubordination. Once all hostility is stamped out (1 Corinthians 15:25–26), even the exercise of dominion, rule and authority becomes unnecessary. We will see more of this later in this booklet.

It is certainly true that God lives forever, but the *olam* texts relating to God are concerned with His divine attributes and their revelation to mankind during the periods of time when God deals with evil and sin. The exercise of these Godly attributes which were for *olam* becomes unnecessary the moment evil and sin disappear from the scene.

God has assumed different titles during these various ages to demonstrate His divine characteristics to man. He may be called “the age-lasting God” because He is acting within a particular age to show His power and salvation. This does not mean He is not eternal [of course He is], but it does show a singular interest of His in that age under discussion.

In summary, *olam* and its variants do not refer to an endless eternity but the word applies in all cases to periods of time of indefinite length (unless the length is stated in the context) which all have beginnings and ends. The study of the occurrences of the Hebrew *olam* as found in the *Englishman’s Hebrew and Chaldee Concordance* of the Old Testament will show this to be true.

The Ages in the New Testament

The Word of God provides the revelation of God concerning His will for man and the penalties or rewards that are associated with it. Because of the inconsistent translation of two Greek words, much confusion exists concerning questions of life, death, the reward of the saved, and the

punishment of the unbeliever. Just like the Hebrew *olam* has been misunderstood, so its Greek equivalent has suffered in English translation.

The Greek words upon which so much depends in the question of human destiny are the words *aion* and *aionios*. The former is the noun and the latter is the adjective. Many references to human destiny have these words associated with them either as a noun or adjective, both in the case of the righteous and the unrighteous. If this word, as a noun or adjective, were translated uniformly in our Authorized Version of the New Testament, the difficulty would be largely removed.

The Greek *aion* is the exact equivalent of the Hebrew *olam* we have been discussing in the first section of this paper. Everything we have said in the former portion to *olam* applies precisely to *aion* or *aionios*.

Aion and Aionios

The noun *aion* means “age” or “eon” and is found 128 times in 105 passages of the New Testament. It doubly occurs in 23 of the 105 passages. In its simple form (noun only), it is found 37 times and with prepositions 68. *Aion* is translated as follows in the Authorized Version:

<u>Usage</u>	<u>Number of Occurrences</u>	<u>Representative Scripture</u>
Age	2	Ephesians 2:7
Course	1	Ephesians 2:2
World	40	Hebrews 6:5
Ever	72	Jude 13
Never	7	John 11:26
Evermore	4	2 Corinthians 11:31
Eternal	2	1 Timothy 1:17

Here are seven different renderings of the word *aion* as it appears in the form of a noun. On the surface, it seems that the translators were confused as to the right meaning of this important word. The word “world” in the English language is used to describe the present arrangement of human life and activity, but it certainly indicates a terminable period. It had a beginning and will have an end. Indeed “world” conveys no duration of time whatever. Yet *aion* shows “time” — though the time is always indefinite as to length. It is just like *olam* in Hebrew. The usual words in English which best approximate the original meaning of *aion* are “age” and “eon” (the latter word is derived from the Greek original itself).

In the translation of the adjective in the King James Version there is not as much variation. *Aionios* is rendered into only four English words.

<u>Usage</u>	<u>Number of Occurrences</u>	<u>Representative Scripture</u>
Eternal	42	Titus 3:7
Everlasting	25	2 Thessalonians 1:9
Ever	1	Philemon 15
World	3	Titus 1:2

The adjective form *aionios* cannot carry a force or express a duration greater than the “age” of which it speaks. It cannot mean eternal or everlasting. It literally means “of the age” or “age-long.”

Once these meanings of the Hebrew *olam* and the Greek *aion* are understood, a flood of light will shine forth to show how God has been using various ages or strategic time periods to perfect His plan of salvation for man.

Christ and the Ages

Let us notice what the New Testament says of Christ’s connection with *the ages*.

“... whom He appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the ages.”

- **Hebrews 1:2, Greek**

Christ created the ages: During the ages, as we shall see, the Heir will inherit the **“all things”** promised to Him by the Father. This will be:

“... according to the purpose of the ages, which He made in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

- **Ephesians 3:11, Greek**

There is a definite purpose associated with the creation of the divine time periods. Christ is King of all the ages which He has created.

“Now to the King of the ages, the incorruptible, invisible, only, and wise God, be honor and glory for the ages of the ages! Amen!”

- **Timothy 1:17, Greek**

Christ is the ruler or king of all the ages. That rulership has been delegated to Him by the Father until the time when rulership will be turned back to the Father

“The kingdoms of this world [*kosmos*] are become our Lord’s and His Christ’s, and He shall be reigning for the ages of the ages! Amen!”

- **1 Corinthians 15:24–28**

Christ will reign over all the ages that are yet to come, including a Millennium and the New Heavens and the New Earth.

In summary, it is clear that the ages were *made*. They were not in existence previous to their being put together. The same thought is found in Hebrews 11:3: **“By faith we understand that the ages were framed by the Word of God.”** God framed the ages for the purpose of glorifying His Son. God sent forth His Son during specific time periods to be a redemption for man.

The crucifixion, which occurred in our present age, is the central redemptive act which secures salvation to all. Up to that great act, the ages had been periods of preparation as far as man is concerned. Once the crucifixion was accomplished, we are now ready for the consummation of the ages. In the final dispensation, all things will be subjected to the King of the Ages, who will then hand the cleansed and subjugated universe up to His Father that **“God may be all in all.”**

Basic Facts Concerning the Ages

In this section it is our purpose to show from the New Testament that the Greek word *aion* (like the Hebrew *olam*) defines a period of time with a definite length, and a precise beginning and end. It does not mean an endless period of time. Let us notice three important factors concerning the ages of the Bible.

1. The ages have a certain beginning:

“But wisdom we speak among the mature, but not wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to naught. But we speak the wisdom of God in a secret, the hidden wisdom which God predetermined before the ages of our glory.”

- **1 Corinthians 2:6–7, Greek**

“Who saved us and called us by a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ before times age-abiding.”

- **2 Timothy 1:9, Greek**

In these scriptures and also in Titus 1:2 we see that there were certain events that occurred in the universe before the ages began. This shows that the ages have a beginning. Even before their beginning, God had a predetermined plan for the bringing of His many sons to glory (Hebrews 2:10).

2. The ages also have an end:

This fact is made clear. Matthew 13:39 says, **“Now the harvest is the completion [the conclusion] of the age”** (Greek). Both the King James Version and the Revised Versions say, **“the harvest is the end of the world”** but the footnote in the R.V. gives the actual Greek as **“the consummation of the age.”** Matthew 13:40, 13:49, 24:3 and 28:20 contain, in the Revised Version, the expression, **“end of the world,”** but in each case the footnote says, **“the consummation of the age.”** In all of these cases Rotherham in his excellent translation properly shows the scripture as saying: **“the conclusion of the age.”**

3. There are several ages revealed in the Bible.

The Bible speaks of the ages of the past, the present age, and the coming ages:

The ages that are past:

“And to enlighten all as to what is the administration of the secret which has been hidden from the ages in God.”

- **Ephesians 3:9, Greek**

“The secret which has been hidden from the ages and from generations but now was made manifest to His saints.”

- **Colossians 1:26, Greek**

The present age:

“Who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us out of the present evil age.”

- **Galatians 1:4, Greek**

“Charge them that are rich in this present age that they not be highminded.”

- **1 Timothy 6:17**

The age (or ages) to come:

“In this era houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and fields, with persecutions and in the age that is coming, age-lasting life.”

- **Mark 10:30, Greek**

“... that he might show in the ages that are coming the surpassing riches of His grace.”

• **Ephesians 2:7, Greek**

By analyzing the above scriptures we see that the Bible speaks of several ages. Ages (in the plural) are spoken of as existing prior to and after this present age. Generally, in the Bible, when no numeral is used in the plural form of a word the numeral two is meant. These scriptures show that there are at least two ages before this present age and at least two ages after, making a certain total of five. Further scriptures show that we need not limit the total simply to five because the Bible shows more than two which are future to us. ⁸

It is now our purpose to discuss the periods of the ages and to look at those ages as they relate to God's plan. Armed with the sure knowledge that all the ages in the Bible (both Old and New Testaments) have certain beginnings and endings, that they do not denote "eternity," we have the essential key for making a proper analysis of the divine periods which God has planned in the accomplishing of His purpose.

TABLE A
The Ages Not Synonymous with Eternity

1. "Before the Ages" (or Age) = 1 Corinthians 2:7; 2 Timothy 1:9; Titus 1:2 ; Romans 16:25.
(It would be absurd to speak about times before eternity [or eternities], but it makes good sense to speak of times before an age [or ages].)
2. "Present Age" (singular) = Galatians 1:4; 1 Timothy 6:17; 2 Timothy 4:10; Titus 2:12.
3. "This Age" (singular) = Luke 16:8; 1 Corinthians 1:20; 2:6-8; Romans 12:2; Ephesians 2:2.
4. "End of Age" (singular) = Matthew 13:39,40; 24:3
(The end of an age is clearly shown in these verses.)
5. "End of the Ages" (*i.e.* relative to the existence of sin) = Hebrews 9:26
(Ages, in the plural come to an end.)
6. "The Coming Age" (singular) = Matthew 12:32; Mark 10:30; Luke 18:30; Ephesians 1:21; Hebrews 6:5
(The coming age will begin at the Second Coming of Christ.)
7. "Ages (plural) to Come" = Ephesians 2:7
(More ages are to begin in the future.)
8. "Future Ages" (plural) = Luke 1:33; Hebrews 13:8.
9. "Plan of the Ages" (plural) = Ephesians 3:11; Hebrews 1:2; 11:3.
10. "Age of the Age" = Hebrews 1:8 (Also the rendering of the LXX)
(Note that both words are in the singular here.)
11. "Age of the Ages" = Ephesians 3:21
(Note that the first word is singular followed by a plural.)
12. "Ages of the Ages" (not eternal when all Bible contexts compared) = Revelation 14:11; 19:3
(Note the plural of both words.)

13. "There will be future Ages" = Jude 25.
14. "The Dispensation of the Fullness of Times" = Ephesians 1:10
(This describes the final period for salvation.)

There are at least two ages prior to our present age in which we now live. Let us now review those former ages which emerged before our own.

C. Gary Reid and Ernest L. Martin, 1975
Edited by David Sielaff, November 2004

ADDENDUM 1: Hebrew *Olam*
(not part of the booklet text)

1. If you wish to make a complete study, all the occurrences of the Hebrew noun *olam* in the Old Testament are in these listed verses. I put the list in the proper manuscript order. There are no adjectives of *olam* in Hebrew. (Hebrew has few adjectives.) Insert the word "age" or "eon" at the appropriate place in the verse. DWS

Genesis 3:22; 6:3f; 9:12, 13; 56:5; 57:11, 16; 66:7; 71:1; 72:17, 19;
16; 13:15; 17:7f, 13, 19; 58:12; 59:21; 60:15, 19ff; 73:12, 26; 75:9; 77:5, 7;
21:33; 48:4; 49:26 61:4, 7f; 63:9, 11f, 16, 19; 78:66, 69; 79:13; 81:15;
64:4f 85:5; 86:12; 89:1f, 4, 28,
36f, 52; 90:2; 92:8; 93:2;
Exodus 3:15; 12:14, 17, 24; 14:13; 15:18; 19:9; **Jeremiah** 2:20; 3:5, 12; 100:5; 102:12; 103:9, 17;
21:6; 27:21; 28:43; 29:9, 5:15, 22; 6:16; 7:7; 10:10; 104:5; 31; 105:8, 10;
28; 30:21; 31:16f; 32:13; 17:4, 25; 18:15f; 20:11, 106:1, 31, 48; 107:1;
40:15 17; 23:40; 25:5, 9, 12; 110:4; 111:5, 8f; 112:6;
28:8; 31:3, 40; 32:40; 113:2; 115:18; 117:2;
Leviticus 3:17; 6:18, 22; 33:11; 35:6; 49:13, 33, 118:1ff, 29; 119:44, 52,
7:34, 36; 10:9, 15; 16:29, 36; 50:5; 51:26, 39, 57, 89, 93, 98, 111f, 142, 144,
31, 34; 17:7; 23:14, 21, 62 152, 160; 121:8; 125:1f;
31, 41; 24:3, 8f; 25:32, 131:3; 133:3; 135:13;
34, 46 **Ezekiel** 16:60; 25:15; 136:1ff; 138:8; 139:24;
26:20f; 27:36; 28:19; 143:3; 145:1f, 13, 21;
Numbers 10:8; 15:15; 35:5, 9; 36:2; 37:25f, 28; 146:6, 10; 148:6
18:8, 11, 19, 23; 19:10, 43:7, 9; 46:1
21; 25:13 **Hosea** 2:19 **Proverbs** 8:23; 10:25, 30;
22:28; 23:10; 27:24
Deuteronomy 5:29; **Joel** 2:2, 26f; 3:20 **Lamentations** 3:6, 31;
12:28; 13:16; 15:17; 23:3, 6; 28:46; 29:29; 32:7, 40; 5:19
33:15, 27 **Amos** 9:11
Joshua 4:7; 8:28; 14:9; **Obadiah** 1:10 **Ecclesiastes** 1:4, 10;
2:16; 3:11, 14; 9:6; 12:5
24:2 **Jonah** 2:6 **Daniel** 9:24; 12:2f, 7
Judges 2:1 **Micah** 2:9; 4:5, 7; 5:2; **Ezra** 3:11; 9:12
7:14
1 Samuel 1:22; 2:30; **Nehemiah** 2:3; 9:5; 13:1;
3:13f; 13:13; 20:15, 23, 42; 27:8, 12 **Job** 7:16; 22:15; 41:4

2 Samuel 3:28; 7:13, 16, 24ff, 29; 12:10; 22:51; 23:5	Habakkuk. 3:6	1 Chronicles 15:2; 16:15, 17, 34, 36, 41; 17:12, 14, 22ff, 27; 22:10; 23:13, 25; 28:4, 7f; 29:10, 18
1 Kings 1:31; 2:33, 45; 8:13; 9:3, 5; 10:9	Zephaniah 2:9	2 Chronicles 2:4; 5:13; 6:2; 7:3, 6, 16; 9:8; 13:5; 20:7, 21; 30:8; 33:4
2 Kings 5:27; 21:7	Zechariah 1:5	
Isaiah 9:7; 14:20; 24:5; 25:2; 26:4; 30:8; 32:14, 17; 33:14; 34:10, 17; 35:10; 40:8, 28; 42:14; 44:7; 45:17; 46:9; 47:7; 51:6, 8f, 11; 54:8; 55:3,	Malachi. 1:4; 3:4	
	Psalms 5:11; 9:5, 7; 10:16; 12:7; 15:5; 18:50; 21:4; 24:7, 9; 25:6; 28:9; 29:10; 30:6, 12; 31:1; 33:11; 37:18, 27f; 41:12f; 44:8; 45:2, 6, 17; 48:8, 14; 49:8, 11; 52:8f; 55:22; 61:4, 7;	

ADDENDUM 2: Greek *Aion*
(not part of the booklet text)

2. Here are all verses where the Greek noun *aion* occurs in the New Testament. The list is in proper manuscript order. Note that the English word “eon” is derived from Greek *aion*. Insert the word “age” or “eon” at the appropriate place in the verse. *DWS*

Matthew 6:13; 12:32; 13:22, 39f, 49; 21:19; 24:3; 28:20	2 John 1:2	Hebrews 1:2, 8; 5:6; 6:5, 20; 7:17, 21, 24, 28; 9:26; 11:3; 13:8, 21
Mark 3:29; 4:19; 10:30; 11:14	Jude 1:13, 25	
Luke 1:33, 55, 70; 16:8; 18:30; 20:34f	Romans 1:25; 9:5; 11:36; 12:2; 16:27	1 Timothy 1:17; 6:17
John 4:14; 6:51, 58; 8:35; 51f; 9:32; 10:28; 11:26; 12:34; 13:8; 14:16	1 Corinthians 1:20; 2:6ff; 3:18; 8:13; 10:11	2 Timothy 4:10, 18
Acts 3:21; 15:18	2 Corinthians 4:4; 9:9; 11:31	Titus 2:12
1 Peter 1:23, 25; 4:11; 5:11	Galatians 1:4f	Revelation 1:6, 18; 4:9f; 5:13f; 7:12; 10:6; 11:15; 14:11; 15:7; 19:3; 20:10; 22:5
2 Peter 2:17; 3:18	Ephesians 1:21; 2:2, 7; 3:9, 11, 21; 6:12	
1 John 2:17	Philippians 4:20	
	Colossians 1:26	

ADDENDUM 3: Greek *Aionios*
(not part of the booklet text)

3. Here are all the occurrences of the Greek adjective *aionios* in the New Testament. Again, the list is in proper manuscript order. Insert the word “age-lasting” or “eonian” at the appropriate place in the verse. *DWS*

Matthew 18:8; 19:16, 29; 25:41, 46	1 Peter 5:10	Ephesians 1:9; 2:16
Mark 3:29; 10:17, 30	2 Peter 1:11	Hebrews 5:9; 6:2; 9:12, 14f; 13:20
Luke 10:25; 16:9; 18:18, 30	1 John 1:2; 2:25; 3:15; 5:11, 13, 20	1 Timothy 1:16; 6:12, 16, 19
John 3:15f, 36; 4:14, 36; 5:24, 39; 6:27, 40, 47, 54; 17:2f	Jude 1:7, 21	2 Timothy 1:9; 2:10
Acts 13:46, 48	Romans 2:7; 5:21; 6:22f; 16:25f	Titus 1:2; 3:7
	2 Corinthians 4:17f; 5:1	Philemon 1:15
	Galatians 6:8	Revelation. 14:6

ADDENDUM 4:
Original Forward to the Booklet

This foreword appeared in the original 1975 booklet. I include it here because it shows the philosophy under which it was written. *DWS*

Foreword

“This booklet is a study (research paper) which is designed to bring to the public’s attention the relevant scriptures showing the divine time periods which God has planned for redemption. The subject may be thought to be highly complex and beyond the ability of man to comprehend. True, there is a great deal of sophistication about the subject even in the Bible, but God has provided a clear skeletal outline for our enlightenment. We hope to show the essential factors concerning this important subject, though we readily admit that several details remain within the divine knowledge which He has not yet made known to man. However, the principal keys for the over-all comprehension of the subject are in the Scripture.

The first important key is to understand that God does speak of periods of time in which He will achieve His desired purposes. These periods are ages which have beginnings and conclusions. It is necessary to know the actual meanings of certain Old and New Testament words which have not been rendered perfectly in many English Versions. These actual meanings become truths which will serve as benchmarks for the real understanding of God’s revelation regarding the time periods for salvation.

This study is not intended to pontificate, but to evaluate. We do not wish to dogmatize, but to analyze. We do not want to legislate, but to illuminate. Our efforts are to inform, we do not ask our readers to conform.

We do ask one thing: May the Spirit of God help us all to understand better this glorious message of the Scripture. It is our desire that this booklet may be helpful towards that end.”

- 1 Kenneth S. Wuest, *The New Testament: An Expanded Translation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961. Reprinted 1994). This is a one-volume edition of a translation first published in 3 volumes, 1956–59.
- 2 Citing Isaiah 60:21: **“Your people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever [olam, for the age], the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified.”** Later Jews also believed that all Israel would be saved. See Mishnah Sanhedrin 10:1: **“All Israelites have a share in the world to come for it is written ...”** (citing Isaiah 60:21), although some Rabbis thought there were exceptions.
- 3 See Dr. Martin’s the article, “The Repentance of God in the Bible” at <http://www.askelm.com/doctrine/d950801.htm>.
- 4 Another translation that is consistent in translating *olam* by “ages” is Youngs Literal Translation.
- 5 In other words sometimes the length of an *olam* or age is specified by context or by description (as in Jonah 2:6). Sometimes *olam* is left to denote a period of time with indefinite and unspecified limits. However it never means “eternal,” not even when referring to God or His attributes.
- 6 Note that these two verses appear to indicate that the earth is decaying of its own accord and not because of man’s destructive actions of the earth. However, though this may be true, mankind is still to care for and keep the earth (like Adam in Eden).
- 7 **“And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it”** (Revelation 21:22).
- 8 Notice Table A below shows some of the New Testament usages of the ages. It will help in giving an overview on the subject. *CGR & ELM*

The Time Periods for Salvation, Part 2

by C. Gary Reid and Ernest L. Martin, Ph.D., 1975
Typeset and footnoted by David Sielaff, November 2004

This is Part 2 of a three article series about the Ages in Scripture and God's Plan of the Ages. [Part 1](#) (the article for November 2004) and Part 2 are comprised of the 1975 booklet by the same name, with my footnotes added. [Part 3](#) (the article for January 2005) is a transcript of a 1984 audiotape by Dr. Martin providing additional information about the ages.

The ages (*olam* in Hebrew and *aion* in Greek) have no relationship to "eternity," in spite of what theologians may wish to believe. It is impossible for the ages to mean eternity as you shall see. *Olam* is almost always translated in the Greek version Old Testament, the Septuagint, by *aion*, which gives us a great resource for understanding all the uses of the near-synonymous terms in the ancient versions of the Old and New Testament.

While immortality and *de facto* eternity are our possession through our salvation in Christ, God did not intend (and the writers of the Old and New Testaments did not conceive) for any concept of "eternal" anything — whether eternal life or eternal hell or eternal judgment. These articles will make this clear.

The text from the booklet is intact, except that I broke up long paragraphs for the sake of clarity and changed the formatting to the current ASK standard. No words have been added or subtracted. Footnotes that are mine are indicated with *DWS* after the note. Continuing with the booklet text ...

DWS

The First Age

Let us now review those former ages that emerged before our own. Genesis 1:1 records a definite commencement by God. In a beginning God created the heavens and the earth. It is an introductory statement to all of scripture and informs us not of the present heavens and earth, but of heavens and earth of which men are generally oblivious.

"For this they are willingly ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water: whereby the world [*kosmos*, world system] that then was, being overflowed with water, perished. But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men."

- **2 Peter 3:5–7**

God's original creation of **"the world that then was"** was perfect. It became **"without form and void"** (Genesis 1:2). This becoming waste and void, from a hitherto perfect condition, seems to have the approbation of Isaiah 45:18 where it says God did not, at first, create the earth in such a chaotic state. The waste and vacant state of Genesis 1:2 apparently arises from events subsequent to Genesis 1:1. Verse two onwards show events after the original creation. References to these events are gathered together under the word **"disruption"** in such places as Matthew 25:34 and Ephesians 1:4 where the King James Version uses the word **"foundation."**

The length of this first age before Genesis 1:2 is unknown. It is a long indefinite period in which the earth was in existence, but no man lived upon it. No doubt, it was a time when the earth was being physically prepared for the emergence of man. It ends in and is separated from the next age by a major disruption or cataclysm that produced the chaotic scene of Genesis 1:2. God began the preparation of another age — the age in which man would appear.

The Second Age

In 2 Peter 2:5 we have a reference to the second age. It ended with the Flood in the time of Noah.

“And spared not the ancient world [kosmos, world system], but preserved Noah, an eighth, a herald of righteousness, having brought in a deluge on the world [kosmos] of the irreverent.”

- **2 Peter 2:5, Greek**

Originally God created a paradise, the garden of Eden, for man to dress and keep (Genesis 2:8, 15). This was done at the beginning of the second age. Eve listened to the serpent's lie and the original harmonious relationship between Creator and mankind was disrupted. The original primeval world became enslaved to a curse (Genesis 3:16–24). Adam and Eve became subject to death and were forbidden access to the tree of life, which would have prolonged their lives indefinitely. And Cain murdered his brother and began a way of evil (Jude 11). In spite of a long line of preachers of righteousness beginning with Seth, the world came to be in such depravity that it had to be destroyed. The flood in Noah's day destroyed **“the ancient world”** (the second age) and so prepared the way for our present world or age.

These first two ages introduced God's strategic time periods. The first age started with the original creation of the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1). During that period, evidently created beings became estranged from God in the celestial spheres. Perhaps, the earth itself was part of the arena where this estrangement occurred. But in the beginning of the second age, there was a remaking of the earth's surface as a habitation fit for man. During this antediluvian period mankind through disobedience of God's direct verbal commands became estranged from God. The Flood came. The stage was now set for the God of love and mercy to demonstrate His divine attributes to a universe totally undeserving of His transcendent grace. After the Flood, we find the appearance of the third age.

The Third or Present Age

The present age began when Noah and his family disembarked from the Ark. Like the second age, which existed from Adam to Noah, it is an age in which human wickedness prevails. Galatians 1:4 says our specific time is **“the present wicked age.”** In Romans 12:2 we are entreated not to follow the evil ways of this age with its care or worries (Matthew 13:22), its unrighteous wealth (Luke 16:8), its wisdom (1 Corinthians 2:6, 8), and its god — Satan (2 Corinthians 4:4). But in this present age the most significant event of human history took place. God knew about sin and evil before the foundation of the world and foreordained Christ to be the supreme sacrifice (1 Peter 1:19–20). Christ legally dealt with sin in our age.

During the earlier part of this age God called Israel as His nation to become a Kingdom of priests (Exodus 19:6). They were to witness to the nations the results of obedience to God's law (Deuteronomy 4:1–8). They failed miserably and were sent into captivity. Many eventually returned to the land of Palestine.

Jesus Christ came to confirm the promises to Israel (Romans 15:8). He came preaching that **“the kingdom of God is at hand”** (Matthew 3:2; 4:17; Mark 1:15). If the nation of Israel had accepted Christ as the Messiah during His ministry, the Kingdom of God could have been ushered in. Of course it was part of God's plan that they would reject the Kingdom and the One who preached

about it, Jesus Christ. Only a minority of Israelites have accepted Christ. **“Even so then at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace”** (Romans 11:5), God has given them the eyes of slumber so that they will not in this age respond — as He closes the eyes of millions of people (Romans 11:8).

At this time there are far more Gentiles having their eyes opened than Israelites (Romans 11:25). Even then, the vast majority of the world’s population in this age have been concluded by God to unbelief (Romans 11:32). Only when the next age appears will all Israel be saved (Romans 11:26). And in more future times, God **“will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth”** (1 Timothy 2:4).

Salvation is only being awarded to a few in this age, but Christ **“gave himself a ransom for all to be testified in His own strategic time periods”** (1 Timothy 2:6, Greek). This present age of ours is the firstfruits period when God is calling out a minority of people. The vast majority of people will wait for the manifestation of Christ’s salvation in the coming age, and in the ages to follow. Our present age began with the Flood and lasts until Christ’s appearance. The next age commences with the Second Coming of Christ.

The conclusion of the present age is referred to three times in Matthew 13:39–40 and 49. In Matthew 24:3 it is associated with His presence when He comes again. The conclusion of the age is that period of time which immediately precedes the Second Coming. The present age will culminate in the cataclysmic events portrayed in the first nineteen chapters of the Book of Revelation. Christ will end this age when He returns as King of kings and Lord of lords to set up His Kingdom. The Christian is promised a life **“for the ages”** (Ephesians 2:6–7). All who are converted in this present age, can be in the first resurrection at Christ’s Second Coming and experience, with Christ, life in all the future ages (1 Corinthians 15:23).

The Fourth Age

The fourth age in God’s plan was known by the Jewish people in the 1st Century as **“the coming age”** (Matthew 12:32). It was the Messianic Age — or the time Christ would be on the earth and Israel would be exalted among the nations. This is also known as the Millennium in Christian circles. This age is to be introduced at the Second Coming of Christ and ends with a world rebellion which will occur at the conclusion of the thousand years (Revelation 20:7–10).

At the end of the fourth age there will be a general resurrection to the Judgment of the Great White Throne (Revelation 20:11–15). Some have thought this period could be considered the fifth age. This is possible, for we are told that the lake of fire which exists at the end of the Millennium will continue on **“for the ages of the ages”** (Revelation 20:10). This seems to show that there would yet be at least two ages after the end of the Millennium. If this is so, it is possible that the Great White Throne period could be reckoned as one of those ages.

In actual fact, since the appearance of the Great White Throne begins with **“the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them”** (Revelation 20:11), this very displacement of the earth and heavens could be the beginning of those New Heavens and the New Earth mentioned more precisely in Revelation 21:1. This may be the case because the same “Throne” (as mentioned in the phrase Great White Throne) is found in the New Earth (Revelation 21:3, Greek, and 21:5). The Great White Throne period may very well be the beginning of the New Heaven and New Earth.

As a matter of explanation, it has to be admitted that much of the Book of Revelation is given in highly symbolic language. Even Christ is described as a Lamb having seven horns and seven eyes (Revelation 5:6). The man called the Beast is shown as having seven heads and ten horns (Revelation 13:1). The New Jerusalem is shown as a cube (or some say a pyramid) some 1300 miles in all its dimensions (Revelation 21:16). If such a structure appeared on earth, as we are told will occur, and it be taken in the literal sense, it would be very unaesthetic to most humans. The

truth is, it is represented as foursquare to show its perfection and symmetry, surely not its actual shape. We need to be careful with interpretations in Revelation. There is very much symbol in it. ¹

There is a great deal of symbolism found in its discussion of the ages. Though there are clear teachings to show that the ages (plural) do exist, a certain caution must be exercised in their application. We hope our readers will understand this.

The Fifth Age

Carefully note this: The ones who stand before the Great White Throne are apparently in bodies which are still capable of death. Only those redeemed saints who come forth in the first resurrection at the Second Coming of Christ are immune from the second death (Revelation 20:6). But those who stand before the Throne are still capable of being cast into the lake of fire and experience the second death (Revelation 20:14). As long as death is in evidence, this period cannot be the last age, because at the conclusion of all things death itself, the last enemy, shall be destroyed (1 Corinthians 15:26). And though death and hades (the place of the dead) are themselves to be placed in the lake of fire (Revelation 20:14) the second death will still have its power.

This fifth age of the New Jerusalem is not the final age. There is much to be accomplished by Christ in order that peace can reign throughout the universe. The lake of fire will even exist during the fifth age. That fire continued **“for the ages of the ages”** even after the Millennial (Fourth) Age is over (Revelation 20:10). As long as the lake of fire exists there is need for judgment and retribution. This shows rebellion and disharmony existing in the universe. But Christ must rule until all hostilities cease (1 Corinthians 15:25–28).

The saints will rule with Christ in the fifth age, but there is at least an age beyond. This fact is further emphasized by the statement that the saints who live in the New Jerusalem period will reign **“for the ages of the ages”** (Revelation 22:5). Since the New Jerusalem period is one age for reigning, there must be at least one age beyond that. Some may feel we are quibbling about words, but this is not true. To the Jews of the First Century, **“the coming age”** was a well-known phrase in their everyday parlance. They were also well aware of ages — in the plural — to come beyond **“the coming age”** (Ephesians 2:7). When the expression “ages” (plural) was used, it was never confused with a singular age to come. ²

There is nothing in the Book of Revelation which says that the lake of fire (the second death) ceases to have its influence in the period of the New Jerusalem as recorded in Revelation 21 and 22. Indeed, it could be said that it is very much in existence because we read in Revelation chapter 21:8:

“But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake of fire which burns with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.”

- **Revelation 21:8**

And though the latter verse may be speaking about sinners in our present age (this is the normal interpretation), we read that *men* (that is, human beings) will still be on earth when the New Jerusalem comes from heaven. That’s what Revelation 21:3 says: **“God will dwell with men** (*i.e., with humans*).” There will also be nations and kings on earth at that period (Revelation 21:24). The New Jerusalem will have gates in which those nations will bring their glory and honor (riches, *etc.*) into the city. The redeemed saints will rule over those nations (Revelation 2:26; 5:10; 22:5). However, those that defile themselves, work abominations, or make lies (apparently those who live at *that* time) shall not be allowed to enter the holy city (Revelation 21:27).

Though the age of the New Jerusalem will be beautiful beyond all the former ages, this last age in the Book of Revelation is something short of the final spiritual condition which the Creator destines all to have when God is all and all as Paul stated in 1 Corinthians 15:28. And though all tears will then be wiped away in the final age in Revelation, and there will be no sorrow, crying, or death for those who live in that age (Revelation 21:4), there is still not life inherent with persons (*i.e.*, everlasting life as Christians are promised) because people must eat of the fruits of the tree of life which come forth each month. Also, the nations of men who will then be on earth must partake of the leaves of the tree in order to have healing from sickness (Revelation 22:2). And though that final age in Revelation is glorious, God is still not all and in all.

God's saints are destined to be **"joint-heirs and joint bodied and joint-partakers of the promise in Christ"** (Ephesians 3:6 Greek). Christ has a spiritual body that has life inherent and will exist forevermore. He doesn't have to partake of any fruit from a tree to exist. It is not necessary for him to make a brew from leaves in order to have health. The promise for final glorification is that we will be like He is (1 John 3:2). We are promised to have the same type of body as Christ has. Christ has also inherited the whole universe as a possession. So will we inherit the same by being joint-heirs with Him. Christ partakes of all the spiritual blessings of the Father. We are to be joint-partakers with Him in all things.

God is finally to be all and in all, but in the New Jerusalem age mentioned in the Book of Revelation there is no full attainment to these promises in Christ. There are still distinctions — still separations — God is still not all and in all. There are certainly people who have not experienced the promise of salvation yet. Indeed, we are told precisely that there are people who will not partake of the glories of that New Jerusalem (Revelation 22:19). Some men will still not have been brought to redemption in that New Jerusalem age — the lake of fire also continues throughout the ages (Revelation 20:10). Some may consider the description of the New Jerusalem to be a simple allegory and only symbolic of spiritual redemption. Though allegory is certainly used throughout the Book of Revelation, there is still enough realism in the final three chapters to show that all saints are not yet co-bodied with Christ.

An Age Beyond the New Jerusalem

While the New Jerusalem is in existence, the saints are told that they will reign **"for the ages of the ages."** (Revelation 22:5). If the New Jerusalem age is one of those ages for rule (which it certainly is), there remains at least one more age after that for ruling. What could this age of rule possibly be for? In the Bible, rulership and judgeship are almost synonymous. The Judges of ancient Israel were Israel's rulers. When Christ comes back to this earth to judge the world, He will do so as a ruler (Psalm 96:9–13). Some saints are promised a rule with Him. And in the New Jerusalem period, they do rule. But also there is at least one period beyond the New Jerusalem period for rulership — it will also be for judgment.

Table B **Explanation of Term = AGES OF THE AGES**

The usage of the phrase **"ages of the ages"** expresses the superlative. It means to emphasize or to accent the greatness of what is being discussed. Let us notice some biblical examples to show similar usages. These are well known biblical phrases.

Hebrew Expressions (Singular followed by Singular or Plural:

1. **"Vanity of Vanities"** (Ecclesiastes 1:2) *i.e.*, great vanity.
2. **"Generation of Generations"** (Psalms 72:5; 102:24, see Wigram, p. 338) *i.e.*, a special generation.

3. **“Servant of Servants”** (Genesis 9:25) *i.e.*, a supreme servant.
4. **“Sabbath of Sabbath”** (Exodus 16:23, etc.) *i.e.*, a most important Sabbath.
5. **“Holiness of Holiness”** (Ezekiel 48:12) *i.e.*, extreme holiness.
6. **“Song of Songs”** (Song of Songs 1:1) *i.e.*, an extraordinary song.
7. **“Completeness of Completeness”** (Isaiah 34:10, see original Hebrew) *i.e.*, absolute completeness.
8. **“Heaven of Heavens”** (1 Kings 8:27) *i.e.*, the highest heaven.
9. **“Holy of Holies”** (Exodus 26:33) *i.e.*, the holiest of all.
10. **“Grashopper of Grasshoppers”** (Nahum 3:17, see Wigram, p. 299) *i.e.*, the great, or big, grasshopper.

Hebrew Expressions (Plural followed by Plural):

1. **“Heavens of Heavens”** (Deuteronomy 10:14) *i.e.*, the highest heavens.
2. **“Lords of the Lords”** (Psalm 136:3) *i.e.*, the supreme Lords

Greek Expressions (Singular followed by Plural):

1. **“King of Kings”** (Revelation 17:14) *i.e.*, the supreme king.
2. **“Hebrew of Hebrews”** (Philippians 3:5 [However, if two Hebrews, say Paul and Barnabas, were under consideration the term could have been “Hebrews of Hebrews”]) *i.e.*, a first-class Hebrew.

Greek Expressions (Plural followed by Plural):

1. **“Holies of Holies”** (Hebrews 9:4, 12, 25) *i.e.*, the holiest of holy areas.
2. **“Ages of the Ages”** (Revelation 14:11; 20:10) *i.e.*, the grandest ages.

This list shows the construction refers to a SUPERLATIVE use. The expression **“ages of the ages”** means “the grandest ages,” or something similar. It is not meant to express “eternity.”

Since in the Millennium and in the New Jerusalem, the judgments will be upon men (Satan and the Beast and False Prophet will also be placed in the lake of fire), what of further judgments upon all the angels and spiritual powers? Paul said that the saints are finally to judge angels (1 Corinthians 6:3). This is showing a judgeship or rulership over spiritual forces — not just men. The Book of Revelation, at no time, shows the redeemed saints ruling over and judging angels. In Revelation, those in the New Jerusalem rule only over the nations of the earth that will then exist (Revelation 21:3, 23–27; 22:5). **“And has made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth”** (Revelation 5:10). The principalities and powers in the heavenlies (all the angelic hosts) will not have yet — by the end of the Book of Revelation — been judged by the redeemed saints. True, Satan had been put into the lake of fire, but nothing is said of all the other principalities and

powers. Yet they are all to be judged (2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6). The redeemed saints are to help in the judging (and ruling) of those powers (1 Corinthians 6:3).

Christ and His saints are to rule and judge until all hostile rule has been abolished, not only on earth, but in the entirety of the universe. For this to be accomplished, there must be at least another age after the final chapter of Revelation — and that is what the Book of Revelation shows. There are ages (plural) for the saints to reign, including the age of the New Jerusalem. It is the last age that all God's plans will be accomplished. Christ then extends His rule of subjugation of all hostile powers in the universe.

“When he [Christ] shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign [recall that the saints will also reign in the age beyond Revelation], till he has put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.”

- ***Corinthians 15:24–26***

Remember that the Book of Revelation says the torment of the lake of fire (for those who are placed therein) lasts for the **“ages of the ages”** (Revelation 20:10) — it lasts beyond the New Jerusalem period. The lake of fire is the second death (Revelation 20:14). And though death and hades (the abode of the dead on earth) were cast into the lake of fire (verse 14), the power of second death continues beyond. The death and hades spoken of in Revelation 20:14 must not include the second death nor any form of death beyond the geographical confines of the earth. But Christ is destined to subdue to His rule the totality of the universe. When that rule is brought to fulfillment, a destruction of death (all death) will occur. **“The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.”** This last deed in the redemptive plan of Christ for the salvation of His creation, will be consummated in an age beyond the final chapter of Revelation. The task of Christ is to subdue the universe to Himself and to bring in harmony and reconciliation to all.

“For he [Christ] has put all things under his feet. But when he says all things are put under him, it is manifest that he [the Father] is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him [the Father] that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.”

- ***Corinthians 15:27–28***

In the final chapters of Revelation, God is not yet all in all. He is only dwelling with men (with humans) — people exist with terrestrial bodies which can live for long periods if the fruits of the tree of life be continually eaten. But there are people still outside the holy city. The fiery lake still has power in the universe. The angels have not been thoroughly judged. The only ones who have reached the promised perfection in Christ are those who were already resurrected at the Second Coming of Christ. They are the only ones over which the second death has no power. That is why there is yet an age beyond the last chapters of the Book of Revelation. This is the final dispensation that Paul was talking about in 1 Corinthians 15 in which all hostile rule will end and the last enemy, death itself, will be destroyed. This is the final strategic time period for salvation.

That Final Dispensation—The Sixth Period

The grandest time of all is found beyond the period of the New Jerusalem in the Book of Revelation. Paul called this concluding period in which God redeems all to Himself as **“the dispensation of the fullness of times”** (Ephesians 1:10). In this last age, harmony and reconciliation will come to all in the universe.

“And having made peace through the blood of the cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.”

- ***Colossians 1:20***

“That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are in earth; even in him.”

- ***Ephesians 1:10***

This period represents the fullness of the times — the conclusion for God’s purpose of the ages. It is the last dispensation of God’s strategic time periods. This is the time Christ will have gained the victory over all rule, all authority, and all power in the universe (1 Corinthians 15:24). The last enemy of the universe to be destroyed is death (verse 26).

“Because the creature [Greek: creation, all the creation of God] shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now.”

- ***Romans 8:21–22***

The whole creation (the entirety of the universe) is in a state of corruption and decay (Romans 8:20). It is waxing old like a garment which wears out and then disintegrates (Hebrews 2:11). But God proclaims that all the creation shall be delivered from this state. Complete deliverance comes when God destroys death (the last enemy). After that destruction, death will be no more. Then will the creation itself be delivered from the bondage of corruption when the redeemed children of God attain their glorious liberty (complete freedom from death) which will be given to all at the close of the dispensation at the fullness of times (Ephesians 1:10). All the universe will then be in harmony with God. ³

“And having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.”

- ***Colossians 1:20***

The extent of Christ’s death cannot be limited. It is all inclusive. Through Christ all death will be eliminated. Through Him only life (abundant life) will prevail. This is God’s promise. It is secure.

The receiving of such grace will come to those who acknowledge Christ as Lord and confess Him as their redeemer. Some few are doing that now, but all will later respond to the call of God.

“And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also has highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

- ***Philippians 2:8–11***

“That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him.”

- ***Ephesians 1:10***

To participate in this final glory in which God will be all and in all, mankind must be changed from an earthly body into a celestial one. It is not the fleshly body (even a resurrected fleshly body) that will exist forevermore. And though people in the Millennium, who have fleshly bodies, may live as **“the days of a tree”** for longevity (Isaiah 65:22), and though the terrestrial (earthly) existences which some can have in the New Jerusalem are beautiful and rewarding, they are still not the celestial glories that make us fully co-bodied with Christ — to have life inherent within ourselves.

Only a full spiritual resurrection, like that of Christ, in which we are totally changed from flesh into spirit (1 Corinthians 15:50–57), can grant to us that co-bodied relationship with Christ.

Resurrections

In the Bible there are only three resurrections to such spiritual glory. There are several and various resurrections to a type of fleshly life, yet there are only three occasions in which a co-bodied resurrection with Christ is possible. Paul speaks of them in 1 Corinthians 15. ⁴

The **first** spiritual resurrection was that of Christ Himself some nineteen hundred years ago (1 Corinthians 15:23). The **second** such resurrection will occur at the Second Coming of Christ (verse 23). This is the **“better resurrection”** mentioned in Hebrews 11:35. The resurrection in the Great White Throne period is not such a resurrection, because people can still be cast into the lake of fire (the second death) even after having come to life. It is also not the same type in which men will have to eat of fruits of a tree, or partake of leaves, to exist in a happy state. No, it is something beyond that.

The saints who are changed (or resurrected) at the Second Coming of Christ will become co-bodied with Christ. They will see Him **“as He is”** (1 John 3:2). They will be exactly the same type of body as Christ now has. The other resurrections are not to this co-bodied existence with Christ — except the last resurrection of all. This last is the **third**, and final, resurrection. Paul calls it the resurrection at **“the end.”** This is described in 1 Corinthians 15:24 — at the very beginning of the verse.

(Note that the word **“cometh”** in verse 24 is in italics in the King James Version. This is because it does not appear in the original text. Paul is speaking about the three resurrections to spiritual life. Referring to the three resurrections, he actually said: **“Christ the firstfruit; afterwards they that are Christ’s at his coming. Then [the resurrection at] the end”** —1 Corinthians 15:23–24.)

This final resurrection is at the end when Christ subdues all rule, authority, and power, and when He destroys death. It occurs at the final dispensation of the fullness of times (Ephesians 1:10). It will result in all being made alive. **“For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive”** (1 Corinthians 15:22). All will become co-heirs, co-bodied, and co-partakers with Christ in all the spiritual blessings and rewards.

The Seventh Period

God completes His plan of redemption and salvation when He becomes all and in all (1 Corinthians 15:28). When this is accomplished, the universe will then be at peace with God and in harmony with His divine characteristics. It is not precisely revealed what all of us will be doing when that period of time occurs. We do know this much, the qualities, virtues, and powers of God will be shared with all the glorified saints. The first characteristic of God as revealed in the Holy Scripture is that He is a Creator (Genesis 1:1). If God is to be all and in all, He will no doubt share that ability and other powers with His children. There are so many things awaiting all the redeemed once we finally inherit **“the glorious liberty of the children of God”** (Romans 8:21).

The reasons for the creation of man on earth was to bring him through various stages to this seventh period — the beginning of “eternity.” That final period is really not a final one at all. It is a beginning — the commencement of a glory which at present is beyond the comprehension of man to fathom. Though God has given a general outline in His Holy Word of His strategic time periods in which His divine plan will find its undoubted fulfillment, He has not revealed to man the exact reasons why He does what He does or why He does it at particular periods of time. All He asks is that man trust (have faith) in Him and in His Son Jesus Christ.

One thing for certain, God has man’s best interest at heart. Indeed, His will is to redeem human kind — all mankind — into a glorious salvation which is now beyond the imagination of man to

comprehend. But the time is now near when that purpose will be fully disclosed in all its glory. The first resurrection of the saints is near. Even the final resurrection to spiritual life for all is not far away as God views time. Let all of us who have presently been called and given this understanding of God's wonderful plan rejoice in the transcendent grace of God which He has bestowed on us — and really to all. God loves all mankind as shown by the sacrifice of His only son, Christ Jesus, in whom the purpose of the ages is accomplished.

“As it is written, ‘Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love him.’”

- **1 Corinthians 2:9**⁵

C. Gary Reid and Ernest L. Martin, 1975
Edited by David Sielaff, December 2004

**Analysis of
“The Time Periods for Salvation”
by David Sielaff**

You may have noticed some interesting factors regarding the information set forth in this booklet. Keep in mind that details of this scenario are open to discussion and there may be alterations in our understanding. Let me analyze some major points. While I have little problem with the evidence put forth in Part 1, I have some difficulty with elements of Part 2. ⁶

The Gap Theory

First, note that there no biblical verses given as evidence of a pre-Adamic world, the first age or *aion*, separate and distinct from the others. Nor is there any biblical evidence for a “gap” of time existing between an initial creation and subsequent disruption (all occurring in Genesis 1:1) and an Adamic re-creation (beginning in Genesis 1:2). The deduction of a pre-Adamic age appears to be based on a prior supposition of a “Gap Theory.” (See section **The First Age** above.) If that theory is unproven, then the existence of an “age” before Adam cannot be upheld. ⁷

Dr. Martin's later research came to demonstrate (years after he coauthored this booklet with Mr. Reid) that the Gap Theory indeed had little evidence in the Bible. Dr. Martin concluded there was no gap and that there was no pre-Adamic creation in Genesis. Consider this about what will happen in the future.

“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.”

- **Revelation 21:1**

The first heaven and the first earth were those created just before Adam, and they are the same heaven and earth we experience today. The heaven and earth at present are not a recreation of a former creation. This passage would be meaningless and misleading if there was a Gap Theory. In fact, neither Jesus, or Paul, or any of the gospel writers give any evidence that a “gap” exists between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2. In Exodus 20:11, 31:17, and Hebrews 4:3–4 we find no mention of any gap. ⁸ Sin did not begin with Satan, it began with Adam. The Gap Theory is lacking.

If there is no Gap Theory then the ages began with a single creation, of which Adam was the main object and the final creation during that period. The creation of the heavens and earth was specifically done to prepare conditions for Adam's creation. The ages were also created at that time, to set the stage for their final purpose fulfilled in the 2nd Adam, Jesus Christ (Ephesians 3:11).

The ages exist only for physical humanity for the salvation of Adam and all humanity through Jesus Christ. When that plan and purpose is fully accomplished, the ages will end. ⁹

The 5th and 6th Periods (subtract one if the Gap Theory is rejected)

You will notice also that Reid and Martin are not dogmatic about the post-Millennium ages. They leave open the possibility as to whether the Great White Throne judgment begins the fifth age, or that it is even an age itself. They do not call it an age, but designate it as the **“That Final Dispensation — The Sixth Period.”** The Scriptures do not call the sixth period specifically an age, but only refer to the millennium and at least one age beyond plural “ages.”

One would think that the destruction of the present heavens and earth at the end of the Millennium would certainly qualify as the dividing point between ages. The creation of a new heavens and a new earth, and the descent of New Jerusalem (in preparation now) for Great White Throne judgment and the subsequent completion of that judgment would certainly constitute a new age.

The 7th Period

In my view the seventh period as designated by Reid and Martin occurs outside of the ages, outside of time, and should not even be considered as a “period” of time. While it will be a real and definite event, after the consummation when God is all in all, there will be no need of “time,” a measure of equal sequential periods. How that will be we cannot know because our limited physical existence is totally bound to time.

“He has made every thing beautiful in his time: also he has set the world [Hebrew, ages plural] in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God makes from the beginning to the end.”

- ***Ecclesiastes 3:11***

What happened before the *aions* began at creation? We are limited by our soulish, physical nature, and we can know nothing outside of what is revealed in the Scriptures. From the Bible we know that the ages began at the same time the creation of the heavens and the earth began. God planned both before He acted. We also know that we, the *ekklesia* of God, were chosen in Christ before the *aions* ever began.

We are given no information in the Scriptures as to what happens after the *aions* are completed, when God the Father becomes **“all in all”** (whatever that fully means). Our understanding of creation, and the plan of God, and the revelation of God are bound up in the plan of the ages, and are limited to the ages.

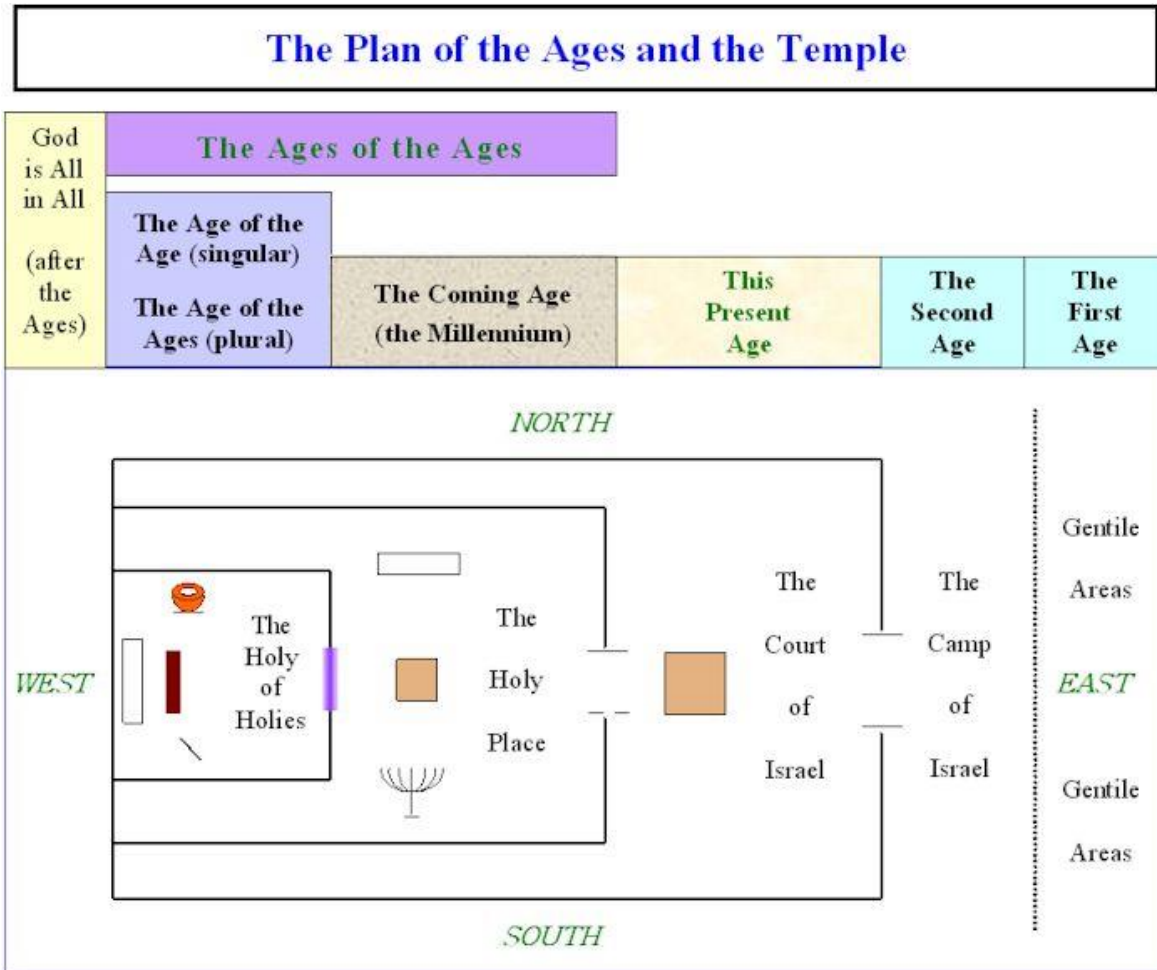
Schematic of the Ages in Relation to the Tabernacle/Temple

Below is a different scheme of the plan of the ages presented in a booklet by A.E. Knoch titled “Eternal Torment or Universal Reconciliation?” ¹⁰ This diagram reflects the ages in relationship to the plan of the Tabernacle and Temple. This comparison relating the ages to the Temple symbolism is quite intriguing. Note that Knoch also denotes a first and second age before the present age. As indicated above, I think this is incorrect, because the Scriptures do not explicitly indicate ages before an Adamic creation.

Look at the scenario put forth by Knoch. Note that he has the **“age of the age”** being the same time period as **“the age of the ages,”** whereas Reid and Martin separate them into distinct and successive ages. I am undecided as to which is correct, or whether another explanation can be presented.

Both the plan and purpose of Temple symbolism, and the plan and purpose of the ages, have as their goal the reconciliation of man to God, accomplished through the work of Jesus Christ. Therefore it is not surprising that they should have a relationship to each other, even if we do not fully understand it at present.

The feasts of Israel relate to time, and to the ages. They not only look to past events of Israel (such as the Passover), but they also look to the future salvation of Israel, and by extension the future salvation of mankind. ¹¹ Therefore there is a relationship between the plan of the ages, and the salvation plan and message of the feasts (the holy days) of Israel. Likewise, as the holy days relate to the Temple (and the plan of salvation that it represents) showing a sequence of salvation events, the *aions* also show a sequence of salvation. The feasts, the Temple and the plan of the *aions* are interrelated and tell a similar story.



Remember, as always, that the revelation of the Mystery was unknown to Israel, so that the plan of salvation shown in the feasts of Israel does not reflect the latest revelation, except in shadow. The Temple plan of salvation is also lacking and required explanation in the Book of Hebrews. For example the reason or purpose of the so-called **“eighth day”** (Leviticus 23:36–39; Numbers 29:35–38, 2 Chronicles 7:9; Nehemiah 8:18) has always been rather obscure to the Jews. Note what the Gospel of John says, keeping in mind that it was written post-Mystery:

“In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, ‘If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believes on me, as the scripture has said, “out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.””

(But this spoke he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)”

- **John 7:37–39**

Everyone thirsts for God. Jesus' words relate directly to that feast, and His statement will be fulfilled after the Great White Throne Judgment of Revelation 11:20ff.

A Proper Study of the Ages

A proper study of the ages or *aions* should take into consideration a careful re-reading of all the Old Testament verses containing the Hebrew word *olam*. The purpose of such a study would bring to clarity obscure meanings in light of the newest and best information revealed in the Mystery, particularly how those verses are translated in the New Testament, where the Hebrew *olam* is translated by the Greek *aion*.

Some passages in the New Testament have been misunderstood because the phrasing is somewhat awkward in the King James translation. Note what Paul wrote to the Hebrews:

“For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest enters into the holy place every year with blood of others; For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world [Greek, *kosmos*]: but now once in the end of the world [Greek, *aions*, plural] has he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.”

- **Hebrews 9:24–28**

This verse is not saying that the ends of the ages occurred at the time of Christ's suffering, but rather that work of Christ as High Priest to the end of the ages was accomplished at that time. As Christ is the center of the Scriptures, so too Christ is likely the center of history, particularly salvation history. Christ's act of salvation is the central crisis of history.

General Conclusions

There are several things we can know for sure. We know that God has a plan of the ages, developed before creation and before the first age came into being. We know that the full extent of the plan of the ages was not known until the revelation of the Mystery (Ephesians 3:9–11 & Colossians 1:26).

As a result of the Mystery, prior understanding of salvation are necessarily lacking, even the understanding of the apostles of Christ. This would apply to plans of salvation such as the gospel in the stars. ¹² The salvation plan of the Temple and its rituals would also be deficient, particularly regarding later stages of the plan of salvation unknown until the Mystery. Before the Mystery mankind could not even look to the presence of God. With the Mystery, we are entered, into the presence of God the Father at His right hand, seated with Christ on the throne.

The salvation scenario of the Old Testament festivals is also lacking until the Mystery. Surely the Jews knew about:

- The Firstfruits (represented by Pentecost and the *ekklesia*),
- A future *aion* commencing at the return of Christ Jesus (represented by the Day of Trumpets),

- An *olam* of peace later designated as the Millennium (represented by the Feast of Tabernacles)
- The Great White Throne judgment of humanity (represented by the Last Great Day).

Other comparisons of the Holy Day salvation plan compared to the plan of the ages still needs to be done.

All understanding of the message and purpose of salvation in the Holy Scriptures was lacking (though they were and remain true) until the revelation of the Mystery to Paul, John, and other apostles. We simply need to understand the limitations of the pre-Mystery scenarios in order to extract the maximum information remaining in the details. Suffice to say that the plan of the ages takes precedence over other salvation scenarios because it is the latest and most comprehensive.

I do not have a full understanding of the details of the ages and how they relate to future events, particularly for the post-Millennium ages. I am not satisfied that anyone else does either. However, the lack is not with the Scriptures, it is with our understanding.

We know that Dr. Martin altered his view of the plan of the ages from the booklet, as evidenced by his statement I quoted in the Newsletter for November 2004 (<http://www.askelm.com/newsletter/l200411.htm>) from page 224, note 63 of his book *Essentials of New Testament Doctrine*. Perhaps what Dr. Martin meant was that the *ekklesia* experiences all the ages in one at this time by virtue of our legal status of being seated with Christ (Hebrews 9:24–28).

As mentioned above, the Old Testament likely has untapped riches not yet understood regarding the use of the Hebrew term *olam*. In addition the New Testament has a number of words that relate and qualify the *aions* such as *kairos* (which means “season” or a distinct portion of time), and *chronos* (which means “time” either long or short).¹³ The Greek word *hemera* (meaning day) can mean a period of time, perhaps months or longer, and *ora* (meaning hour) also can prophetically mean a period of time, but a comparatively short one. All these words must be considered at the same time that a proper study of the ages is done.

Our Salvation Nears

Finally, rest assured that we can know for certain that as time passes, our salvation approaches ever closer, as the apostle Paul wrote:

“And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand.”

- **Romans 13:11**

¹ There is no reason to suppose that the New Earth will be the same size as the present earth. The present earth is designed to handle somewhat more than the 6 billion people living at present. The New Earth will have adequate space for some 20 billion or more people (perhaps a lot more) from the time of Adam through the millennium. This would logically require a larger earth than at present. Further, because New Jerusalem will be some 1,300 miles on a side, the earth should be larger so that the curvature of the earth is in proportion to such a large structure. If the present heavens and earth are any indication, the new heavens and the New Earth will be even more aesthetically pleasing. Regarding the size and beauty of the universe, see my January 2004 Newsletter at <http://www.askelm.com/newsletter/l200401.htm>, and particularly the references at footnote #2. DWS

² Some have also wondered about the phrase **“the ages of the ages.”** It may look like an expression, which might mean ages toppling over ages — reaching out into eternity. But this is not the case. See Table B. It simply signifies ages (plural) in the superlative sense *i.e.*, the grandest ages. Those ages

in the Bible can include the Millennium (Revelation 14:11; 19:3), also the time of the Great White Throne (Revelation 20:10), and that of the New Jerusalem (Revelation 20:10). Even within the New Jerusalem period there are still ages to come — though the New Jerusalem may be considered one of those ages under discussion (Revelation 22:5). It seems certain that the expression “**ages of the ages**” expresses time beyond the New Jerusalem age. DWS

- [3](#) For further information on this topic, see the article “The Death of Death” at <http://www.askelm.com/doctrine/d030101a.htm> that Dr. Martin wrote in 1979. DWS
- [4](#) See the related articles “The Time Periods for the Resurrections” at <http://www.askelm.com/doctrine/d971005.htm> and “Salvation and the Biblical Doctrine of Deification” at <http://www.askelm.com/doctrine/d040202.htm>. DWS
- [5](#) This verse paraphrases Isaiah 64:4. DWS
- [6](#) The separation of Part 1 and Part 2 are entirely my doing for the sake of space, and do not occur in the original. DWS
- [7](#) One verse frequently used to show a pre-Adamic world is 2 Peter 3:6. However, that passage gives no indication other than having a relationship to the time of the flood. Further, the supposed period of the perfect pre-Adamic creation had no humans. Neither did the supposedly long period of waste before the creation of Adam. Yet one is considered an “age” and the other is not. Why should not both periods be considered ages? Both were under God’s sovereign control. DWS
- [8](#) Suppose the Gap Theory was true. First would come a creation in Genesis 1:1 that would exist for untold thousands of years. Then a satanic destruction of the world occurs and the world lays waste for another period of untold thousands of years. Only then does God allegedly “create” the heavens and the earth in Genesis 1:2 a second time. However, Exodus 20:11, 31:17 and Hebrews 4:3–4 speak of God resting on the 7th day after one creation, the first, not a second creation. DWS
- [9](#) This means there was only one age before the present wicked age, which was the first age. Our present age (from the flood to Christ’s Second Coming) would be the second age. The first (past) and present ages together could make up past “times *aiōnian*” referred to in Romans 16:25 (Greek); Ephesians 3:9, and Colossians 1:2, as well as the verses indicating events “before the ages” as in 1 Corinthians 2:7; 2 Timothy 1:9; and Titus 1:2. DWS
- [10](#) Canyon Country, CA: Concordant Publishing Concern, n.d., used with permission. DWS
- [11](#) The salvation of all mankind is not part of the revelation of the Mystery. The reconciliation of all to God was hinted at powerfully in Isaiah and in pre-mystery passages of the New Testament, such as in 1 Corinthians chapter 15. The Mystery fully explained how and when that salvation of all would occur. DWS
- [12](#) This is the concept that the message of salvation is expressed by the names of the stars and constellations in the heavens. These names tell a story of redemption through a savior to come from the Jews. While this may be true and attractive, the historical bases of the star names is cloaked in unverifiable legend and supposition. DWS
- [13](#) Again, note how Hebrews 9:26 relates *kosmos* to *aiōns*. This is intentional. DWS

The Doctrine of the Ages in the Bible

by Ernest L. Martin, Ph.D., 1984

Transcribed, edited and expanded by David Sielaff, January 2005

This is the third of a three-article series about the Ages in Scripture and God's Plan of the Ages. "The Time Periods for Salvation, Part 1" (the article for November 2004) is found on the ASK website at <http://www.askelm.com/doctrine/d041101.htm>. "The Time Periods for Salvation, Part 2" (for December 2004) is at <http://www.askelm.com/doctrine/d041201.htm>. These two articles originated from the 1975 booklet by the same name, with my footnotes added.

This article for January 2005 is Part 3, an independent article transcribed from a 1984 audiotape by Dr. Martin. It contains his updated view of the subject of the ages as of 1984.

DWS

One doctrine that gives problems to Christians today it is that which concerns the Ages. The truth is the majority of Christian people today do not understand that the Bible itself talks about various ages both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. Most people do not even realize that such a teaching exists in the Bible.

In fact when you even mention a doctrine like this many people at first consider it as heretical because they cannot conceive that such a teaching is in the Bible at all. The main reason for this is because the Bible, being of Hebrew and Greek origin, has several Greek or Hebrew words that are not quite rendered in the fashion that the people in the Old or New Testament times understood them. If we get proper translations of the Old and New Testaments I think we can begin to understand that there truly is a doctrine of the ages.

You might even put it in the plural, that there are doctrines of the ages. This is because there are ages that pertain to the people of Israel, certain times when things will happen to them, and other times when they will not happen. There are ages that pertain to the Gentiles. There are even ages that pertain to angels. There are ages which pertain to the Son of God while He was here on earth, and what He will do in the future.

We know in the Bible that there are various ages. If we could get the proper translation of the Old and the New Testaments — and there are some translations out that are like that and we are very thankful for them — but if you get those and understand what the original Greek and Hebrew have to say, then you are in much better shape to understand what the ages are all about.

One reason I wish to teach on this topic is to bring up-to-date some of the things we have gone into as long as 10 years ago. ¹ This doctrine of the ages is not something unique to us. In fact anyone who reads the Bible in the originals and can understand what Moses, the prophets, and the apostles have to say, could be well aware that ages do exist.

Defining an "Age"

An age means a time period, usually very long, but it does not have to be long. It depends on circumstances. An age has a beginning, it has a middle part, and it has an end. That is the most important thing. It has an end. If it has an end, it must have also a beginning. It is not something that you can equate with "eternity," or even the word "forever." The word "forever" has no end, it means it goes on and on and on, *ad infinitum*.

The ages of the Bible are not that way. They have beginnings. They have a middle portion between the beginning and the end, but they always have an end. This is why it is so important for us to realize this: so many words in the Bible are mistranslated by such words as “eternal,” as “forever,” or “ever and ever” when in actual fact the original writers did not intend that type of meaning at all.

Some of the basic doctrines of Christianity today — false doctrines — are based on a misconception, misunderstanding, or mistranslations of the Hebrew and the Greek on this very subject. The doctrine of the ages has been, and is, vastly misunderstood by many people.

Let me say on the outset that I do not know every little teaching (or big teaching), or every detail about the doctrine of the ages. But we do have some knowledge and God has graced us with a good deal of understanding on this material, and especially if a person will simply read what the original Hebrew and Greek of the Old and New Testaments have to say, you will begin to see many wonderful, fantastic truths that remain hidden to most people simply because they do not see the proper translation of the divine revelation.

That does not mean that we have some esoteric knowledge that no one else has because these things can be known from the Scripture if a person will pay attention to them. More than 99% of people today do not comprehend nor do they take into consideration the doctrine of the ages as it relates to salvation, as it relates to Israel, as it relates to the *ekklesia*, as it relates to the millennial period coming in the future, or to the Great White Throne judgment. All of the doctrines dealing with time periods mentioned in the Bible are not even comprehended by most people because they do not understand what the doctrine of the ages happens to be.

That is why we are at least able to read what the Scripture says and I hope we are able to apply some of these teachings in a proper way, so that we can come to some basic understanding of what this subject is all about.

Rotherham Translation

As far as the ages are concerned, I will first quote to you from the Rotherham translation. Rotherham wrote about 80 years ago ² and there are other translations I could quote as well that have virtually the same thing. But Rotherham is well known by many of us and he translates in Ephesians chapter 3, verses 8–11 a teaching from the apostle Paul that deserves to be read in its entirety. It is only about four verses, yet it is full of divine truth about what the present holds for us, what the future will hold, and how there is a plan of the ages that God has put into operation through Jesus Christ. This plan involves you, it involves me, and it involves everyone that was ever on earth. The very reason for mankind to be placed here is a part of the plan of the ages which we find the apostle Paul talking about.

Let me show from the Rotherham version starting in Ephesians 3:8:

“Unto me, the less than least of all saints was given this favor, unto the nations [the Gentiles] to announce the glad-message [the good news, the Gospel] of the untraceable riches of the Christ, and to bring to light ...”

- **Ephesians 3:8–9, Rotherham**

This is what we all need. We need to see something as it is being illuminated by God Himself through the Word of God, Christ Jesus. What Paul was saying was that the Gospel message about the untraceable, or the unsearchable riches of Christ are now being brought to light,

“... what is the administration of the sacred secret [the great mystery] which had been hidden away from the ages in God, who did all things create ...”

- **Ephesians 3:9, Rotherham**

This is worded a bit awkwardly in English, but Paul is saying that these teachings now being brought to light through the inspiration of God's Holy Spirit was an administration of a **“sacred secret which had been hidden away”** from previous ages which God had created.

“... in order that now, unto the principalities and the authorities in the heavenlies [even the angelic entities] might be made known through means of the assembly [the *ekklesia*], the manifold wisdom of God, according to a plan of the ages which he made in the anointed Jesus our Lord.”

- **Ephesians 3:10–11, Rotherham**

In other passages Paul says that this plan of the ages was made before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4). It was completely known, and fully devised, and clearly understood, and in reality already put into action before man was ever placed on this earth. You and I are a part of the **“plan of the ages”** which God decreed for all of us.

The Reason for the Plan of the Ages

The reason we are in this flesh for some 70-odd years, or however long, is to be part of that “plan of the ages.” We are destined to become members of the very family of God. Indeed, right now in a nascent sense, we are already the children of God (Romans 8:26, Galatians 3:26, 1 John 3:9–10, 4:4, 5:2), but we are destined to become even greater than we are now, because the physical body that we possess at the present time is not what we will have in the future. Our bodies must be changed to a spiritual type of composition and our characters must be changed also into a type of spiritual character that is possessed by God and by Christ Jesus.

These things will be given to us in the future when the fullness of the plan of the ages is brought to its conclusion. That is why we need to know what this plan is all about. The apostle Paul in the books of Ephesians and Colossians was talking about this sacred secret, this mystery, which in other ages had not been made known by God. Of course, the Mystery was known by God Himself, but it was not made known by God to man, not even to angels.

The apostle Peter said concerning Jesus Christ:

- that He came on the earth at the time that He did,
- that He lived a perfect life for a little over 30 years,
- that He died on a tree on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem,
- that He was resurrected from the dead,
- that He went back to heaven,
- that He is now in a glorified body, and
- that He is coming back a second time.

All these things the apostle Peter said, even **“angels desire to look into”** (1 Peter 1:3–12). Not even they have been able to understand completely what was the plan of God concerning the ages.

The apostle Paul said, however, through the Holy Spirit, that the *ekklesia* of God, the assembly of people, the holy ones back at his time (and we could extend it up to our time today), that the knowledge of this sacred secret has now been brought to light through the knowledge of Christ and that the **“plan of the ages”** which He made in Christ Jesus, our Lord, before the foundation of the world, can now be made manifest.

That is why it is important for all of us to know what that plan of the ages happens to be. It involves salvation. It involves the salvation of all people on earth, all human beings. But people on earth will

gain salvation in time periods which God Himself has designed. Not everyone, as we all know, accepts Jesus Christ at the present time. The vast majority in the world does not — nor have they ever done so.

Progress of the Plan of the Ages

If a person does not accept Christ Jesus and if a person does not have God's Holy Spirit then they cannot be considered a Christian, according to Paul in Romans chapter 8. ³ That does not mean that those people are bad of themselves. That does not mean that they will not have an experience with God in the future. But it does mean, according to the **“plan of the ages”** at the present time, that some are accepting God now and some are not.

Let me tell you, the plan is going exactly as God intended. There is no deviation whatsoever in the plan of God relative to the ages or anything else. Everything is going exactly as planned. ⁴

“Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, ... Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he has purposed in himself: That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who works all things after the counsel of his own will: That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.”

- **Ephesians 1:5, 9–12**

In the Book of Revelation it says that Jesus Christ was then **“slain from the foundation of the world”** (Revelation 13:8). That does not mean that He was actually slain, but in the plan of the ages, at a very strategic time period, Christ Jesus came into the world and died. When He did die, he died for the salvation of the world on time, according to the **“plan of the ages.”**

This salvation that we have in Christ does embrace the totality of the human race because we find in 1 Timothy chapter 2 the apostle Paul speaking about God:

“Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.”

- **1 Timothy 2:4**

That means the whole truth and nothing but the truth. The definite article is there, **“that all men will be saved and come to unto the knowledge of the truth,”** the truth of the divine **“plan of the ages.”** If you do not understand it completely yet, if I do not understand it completely yet (and we may not), we one day will know exactly what the plan of the ages happens to be because all the truth will be given to us. We shall come to a full knowledge of the truth of God. It will come primarily through the pages of this Bible, the Old and the New Testaments.

Let me tell you this, the standard that we have in front of us here, the 49 books of the Old and New Testament, that we find in the Bible is just the basic outline of the truth. It is not the fullness that God can give us in the future, but it does give us all the standard teachings that we need at this present time in this flesh to comprehend as best we possibly can what the **“plan of the ages”** really happens to be.

The apostle Paul was willing to admit that even he saw things **“through a glass, darkly”** (1 Corinthians 13:12) and we only see in part. We do not see completely yet. But when that time comes when our physical bodies are changed into a spiritual composition and our characters are united with Christ Jesus to have His perfect righteousness, then we will have the fullness of the

plan of God revealed to us in all its glory. It will be consistent. It will be beautiful. It will be awe-inspiring.

Quite a lot of that plan was revealed to the apostle Paul and others back some 1900 years ago, and we have it recorded in the Bible.

“Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”

- **1 Timothy 2:4–5**

We do not need any man on this earth, whatsoever, to stand in the way between you and God — except Christ Jesus. By the way He is not on this earth except in Spirit. He is in the heavens at the present time. We should look vertically if we want to find where the head of the church is, and the only one between us and God the Father happens to be Jesus Christ.

Do you realize that each one of you only has one individual between us, ourselves, and God the Father, the creator and sustainer of the universe? That person is Jesus Christ, who we find is the creator of the universe under God. Only one, that is Christ Jesus. That means that we are third in order below God the Father and Christ in the ranking order of governing the universe. I know that we are just human beings at the present time, and very fallible, and sinners. That is correct, but we are developing through the means of God and through His power and glory, to attain to the full stature of Jesus Christ Himself, to be just like He is, and to be in Him.

In actual fact, since He is the firstborn of God, and we are going to be in Him, there will not be any second-born people of God once salvation comes along, because we all will be in the firstborn. We all will share in the glories of this universe, both the physical and the spiritual, the invisible and the visible. We all will be co-heirs, co-partakers of this vast universe under God the Father.

When Will This Occur?

When will all of this happen? In verse 6 it says: **“Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time”** (1 Timothy 2:6). There is a mistranslation in the King James Version. The original Greek for **“in due time”** says that the testimony of Christ will be testified all right, and He will become a ransom for all, that is true, but not simply **“in due time”** but it means **“in its own time periods,”** in its strategic time periods. This scripture here is also a part of the doctrine of the ages and the plan of the ages.

We are not saved immediately, all of us. Some are saved, that is quite true, but not all, everyone in his own order said the apostle Paul. There are some at Christ’s coming, and there will be some at another time, but all will eventually, when the plan of the ages has come to its fruition, come to a oneness with God, according to Ephesians chapter 1:

“That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven [Greek, “heavens” plural], and which are on earth; even in him.”

- **Ephesians 1:10**

This is all part of the doctrine of the ages of the Bible. Ages have a beginning. They have an end to them. These strategic time periods mentioned in 1 Timothy 2:6 also are part of the plan of the ages.

This teaching of the ages necessarily involves the use of Hebrew and Greek words for you to understand them in a perfect way, if that is possible. However, we can go a long way in comprehending what the words mean if we just analyze what the Old and New Testaments have to

say on these words. To really see them you need a concordance which will give you every instance that these words denoting the ages are found in the Scripture.

Hebrew for “Age”

In the Old Testament the word that is predominantly used for “age” is many times translated as “forever” or “everlasting” when they really should not do so because if you see some of the usages of this word in the Old Testament, it could not possibly be “forever.” In no way could it be that way even when it refers to God. The word does not necessarily mean that at all when it refers to Him in the sense of perpetuity, or forever, or in an *ad infinitum* sense.

The word in the Old Testament is *olam*, as we would give it in English characters. This word *olam* is used almost 500 times in the Old Testament. If you would get a concordance like Wigram’s *The Englishman’s Hebrew and Chaldee Concordance of the Old Testament* ⁵ on sale in most religious bookstores today. Look under “forever” and it will tell you that the Hebrew *olam* is mainly the one that is used in the Old Testament. Then you go to that word *olam* and you look up all the usages found in the King James Version. What you will find is that it is translated “forever” (about 250 times), sometimes “from everlasting to everlasting,” sometimes “forever and ever” (24 times) and just “everlasting” alone it is translated 60 times. ⁶

But it is translated in other contexts very differently. These other contexts show clearly that the word cannot always be used as “forever” which means no termination whatsoever. This is because two times it is translated “of ancient times,” or “of old times,” sometimes “of old.” Sometimes it is translated just simply “old,” or “ancient,” “anymore,” “world,” “continuance,” “lasting,” “long time,” “anytime.” Sometimes it is translated simply as “long” and in others it refers in most interesting ways to lengths of time which have various duration of days or years to them.

The Olam of Jonah

The shortest length of time where *olam* is used in the Old Testament is for a 3-day period. If you look in the book of Jonah where it describes Jonah’s ordeal of being in the fish’s stomach, he says that he was in the fish’s belly, according to his perception, “forever,” for *olam*.

“Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.”

- **Jonah 1:17**

“The waters compassed me about, even to the soul: the depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head. I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever [*olam*]: yet have you brought up my life from corruption, O Lord my God. When my soul fainted within me I remembered the Lord: and my prayer came in unto you, into your holy temple. They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy. But I will sacrifice unto you with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord. And the Lord spoke unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land.”

- **Jonah 2:5–10**

It says he was in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights, for *olam*, but he was only there for three days. This means that sometimes *olam* conveys a period of time of time which is less than a human life. At other times it means just a human life span. In the Bible it even says in Moses that an ancient slave of Israel had to have a hole drilled into his earlobe. That hole was to identify him or her as a slave and it was to last “forever,” as far as the King James Version translates it. It only means for *olam*. It means for as long as a person remains a slave, then it would be in existence (Exodus 21:6 and Deuteronomy 15:17). Obviously if you cause a hole to be put into

the skin a vestige would stay there until the person dies, we know that, but a Hebrew slave could be redeemed after 6 years by the sabbatical year scheme, certainly no longer than a jubilee period. So the word *olam* does not necessarily mean “forever.”

Greek for “Age”

The same thing is found in the New Testament. I would say it is more important to distinguish the words in the New Testament than even in the Old Testament. When we come to New Testament times the apostle Paul says new revelation had been given, a new enlightenment had come on the scene, a new understanding that even the angels did not know before, and the prophets of old did not understand (Ephesians 3:8–11). Paul said in Ephesians and Colossians that even he did not understand at first until the revelation of the Great Secret, the Mystery, or as Rotherham translates it, “**the sacred secret,**” when it was revealed to the apostle Paul about 61 C.E. It comprised the “**plan of the ages**” which angels did not even know about, but God knew. Now, the apostle Paul and other apostles began to understand. It had to do with the doctrine of the ages.

Two words are used in the New Testament, which you will find translated time and again, not only in the King James, but in even more modern translations, as “forever” or in some cases “eternity” or “eternal.” The two words are cognates of one another. One is *aion*; that is the noun form. The other is *aionian*, which is the adjective form. They mean virtually the same thing. It says that for *aionian* times certain things will take place. In almost all translations today translators will render the word *aion* as “forever” or “everlasting” and they will translate the adjective *aionian* as the “*everlasting life*” rather than “*aionian life*.”

There are some translations that maintain the Greek transliterated as *aionian*. That is very good and fine to do every time you encounter the terms *aion* or *aionian*. They happen to be perfectly good English words. You have heard about the eons, the eons of time. Even to us *eon* means a period of time usually in close association with the word “age” which has to do with something beginning, something ending, but usually it is a long period of time. You might say “the age of Abraham,” or “the eon of Abraham.” It means a long time ago, a long period of time, but it does not mean at all “forever.”

When you find *Wigram’s Greek Concordance to the New Testament*⁷ and look up the word “forever” or “everlasting” in the English it will show you that it comes from the Greek word *aion* or the adjective form *aionian*. Then look up where these words are used in the context of the New Testament and you will find some very interesting meanings because clearly they do not mean “forever.” This is where most people misunderstand the doctrine of the ages, because when they read the New Testament in most modern and old translations they read “forever.” It is no wonder they get all mixed up on the doctrines of punishment, the doctrines of reward that God wants to give us in the future, the doctrines of what is happening here on earth today, and what happened in the past. It is no wonder they do not understand because they are not using the proper English words to give a correct rendition from the Greek.

For example, the word *aion* is used several times to mean a period of events which were before these periods, for example before the ages. See 1 Corinthians 2:7 and 2 Timothy 1:9, Titus 1:2, and I could go on and on. You will look in the New Testament that it says that there were events before there were the ages or before an *aion*. Obviously *aion* cannot mean eternity, can it?⁸ If it is “before an age” and age means eternity, how can you be before eternity? It is an impossibility.

In these verses that I gave you above, they speak about “before the ages,” before they ever began. Certain things occurred before the ages. In fact I will tell you one thing that happened before this age in which we are living, and before the age of Adam. It involves you. It involves me. It is that you and I, and all of us together as God’s children, were picked out and were understood as personalities before the ages began, before Adam and Eve were ever placed on earth. That is what it says in the New Testament.

Christ's Role

That is why it is important to understand what *aion* and *aionian* mean, because they tell us that something happened before this sequence of ages took place. In fact it talks about the present age, in the singular, in Galatians 1:4, in Luke 16:8 it calls it **“this age.”** Also in Hebrews 9:26 it says there will be an **“end of these ages.”** The rendering in the King James Version is:

“For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end [completion] of the world [aions, ages plural] has he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.”

- **Hebrews 9:26**

How can that mean “forever” if there is coming an end to the ages? Look at it in the original of Hebrews 9:26. In fact it talks about another age that will be called **“the coming age”** (Matthew 12:32).

“And whosoever speaks a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaks against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world [aion, age], neither in the world [aion, age] to come.”

- **Matthew 12:32**

It says there will be ages in the plural to come, more than one age, after the one we are in. There is more than one age. You will find that in Ephesians chapter 2

“That in the ages [aions] to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.”

- **Ephesians 2:7**

Even Luke in 1:33 speaks of future ages in the plural:

“And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever [to the aions, plural]; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.”

- **Luke 1:33**

I have already referred to the **“plan of the ages,”** in the plural in Ephesians 3:11. Then the apostle Paul has a strange expression in Hebrews 1:8 ⁹ and he says there is an age of the age.

“But unto the Son he says, ‘Your throne, O God, is for ever and ever [to the *aion* of the *aion* (both singular), “to the age of the age”]: a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of your kingdom.”

- **Hebrews 1:8**

That means this is most excellent, a superlative age.

Then, thanks to another confusing King James Version translation, in another expression in Ephesians 3:21 Paul speaks of “the age of the ages.”

“Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages [generations, not *olam*], world without end [of the *aion* (singular) of the *aions* (plural)]. Amen.”

- **Ephesians 3:21**

Then in another in Revelation, John says “ages of the ages.”

“And the smoke of their torment ascends up for ever and ever [to the *aions* (plural) of the *aions* (plural)]: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receives the mark of his name.”

- **Revelation 14:11**

Some people have wondered, how in the world can you translate that as eternity when it says “eternity of eternities”? That does not make any sense. But **“ages of the ages,”** superlative ages, makes sense. Now in the Old Testament we have expressions “*olam* of *olam*” which means an age of the age, similar to “*aion* of *aion*” just like the New Testament has. The Jewish scholars were asked this question: why if you are going to use the word *olam* which means age or world to come as in “*olam* to come,” why would you say “*olam* of *olam*,” meaning “age of age”? It seems to be a superlative. That is their answer. They said because the Sadducees who were the priestly sectarian group back in the time when Christ was here. ¹⁰ They did not believe in a resurrection in the future. In fact they did not even believe there would be another age. They believed that the only age was the one they were in (and that we are still in). They had the Old Testament Scripture to make it quite clear that there was a future age to come, the millennium as we might call it, and as we interpret it today. The Jews said that the reason God finally said “*olam* of *olam*” was because it means that there is a present age now and an age to come. That is their explanation and it makes perfectly good sense.

In the New Testament we have in Greek,

- the **“age of the age,”**
- the **“age of the ages”** and
- the **“ages of the ages.”**

That may seem a little confusing to you, but these are distinctions that you find in the New Testament. If you have Wigram’s *Concordance* which will give you every reference and show you whether it is singular or plural, you can begin to make some sense of what the apostles Paul, John, Peter, and even Christ Himself were trying to say about this “plan of the ages.” In the 25th verse of Jude it speaks that there will be future ages, definite future ages in the plural.

“To the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever [panta tous aiones, to “all the ages,” plural]. Amen.

- **Jude 25**

I wish I knew all about those ages. If you can find out exactly when all the ages began and when they end, and what happens in each one of them, would not that be wonderful? We do know things only darkly, not absolutely, at this time. However, we can know quite a good deal if we will just pay attention. The point I want to bring out — and it is most important that we realize this — is that the word *olam* in the Old Testament, or the word *aion* or its cognate forms in the New Testament, they never mean “forever,” “everlasting” or “eternity.” They never mean that of themselves.

You can improperly insert the concept of eternity into the texts relating to *olam* and *aions*, and in many cases this is done when it refers to God. ¹¹ Certainly we know from other Scriptures that He lives for all eternity. He always had an existence and He always will have an existence. But because we have words like *olam* and *aion* associated with God and His eternity, some people have equated the meaning of *olam* and *aion* as having an identification with eternity. That is not the case. God Himself, though He is eternal, deals with people in different ways, in different ages, at

different times. We must understand that or else we will get into a great deal of confusion regarding doctrines of the Bible. [12](#)

Punishment of Sin

Let me tell you one doctrine specifically where you will get into problems. It is one which hardly anyone today of the mainline denominations understands, whether they are evangelists in a tent or convention halls, or whether they are in staid denominational church buildings, a big denomination or little, it makes no difference, most of them get all mixed up when it comes to the doctrine of punishment for sin. Punishment for sin is time and time again associated with the doctrine of the ages, with the doctrine of the *olam* in the Old Testament and more particularly with the doctrine of *aion*, or *aions*, or the *aionian* in the New Testament and it is most often mistranslated “forever.”

Let me give you an example of how disastrous this can be if you translate the word *aion* in the New Testament as “forever” or “for all eternity.” Look at Revelation 14:11 where it says that people will be put into a lake of fire and they will be tormented — it seems — like for a long, long time. Do you know what it says in the King James Version and in most other English translations of the Bible? It says they will be in torment “for ever and ever.” So we have the doctrine of eternal hell fire. The Scripture makes it quite clear that the fires of hell will one day go out. Oh, how many people do not like that! It says that the Tophat, that is Gehenna, one day will be holy to God. It says that in the Jeremiah 7:31–32.

It says also there shall be a new heavens and a new earth in which there will be happiness and joy, and the old things will be done away. You will not remember them any more. The smoke of the torment is supposed to go up forever and ever and ever. Even the apostle Peter says that the world will be burnt up, that is quite true, but then it will be refashioned to be a new heavens and a new earth in which dwells righteousness and goodness and eternal life, truly everlasting life in God, because only God has eternal life. The only “eternity” in you is His Spirit, which comes from God and is part of God Himself.

You are the one who will have everlasting life in the future. But the point is this, if you translate those words “forever and ever” then you have a hell fire that supposedly will burn forever. And if the punishment of sin is to be in that hell fire forever, then I suppose that is where you will be. Indeed, that is exactly where you will be.

The Duration of “Hell”

The point is that these words translated “forever” will get us into trouble. Let me show you how simple it is from the example of the New Testament to indicate how long the fires of hell, the punishment for sin, will last.

Did Jesus Christ pay for our sins? The answer, according to all the New Testament, is yes. What happens to be the consequence of sin? If you ask most people today they will say you go to hell fire and burn forever and ever, because that is what it says, does it not? Well, it does not say that, it says for *olam* or it says for *aion*, and that has an end to it. The ages have an end.

They may say “My Bible says forever and I am going to accept it.” If you want to believe mistranslated words, go right on. That is perfectly all right, but the words really do not mean forever. You can absolutely prove it. If the consequences of sin happen to be hellfire burning in torment forever and ever and ever, without any relief and that is a consequence of sin, then you do not have a Savior in Jesus Christ. That is a fact.

We do have a Savior. But if you say that the sins we commit are not repented of, and that we are going to hellfire and burn forever (which is normally the teaching you find in 95% of Christendom today), then Jesus Christ cannot be our Savior. From the beginning of the New Testament to the end it says that He paid the penalty for our sins. Our sins were placed on His back. If our sins, no

matter if they are small or great, were to take us into hellfire and burn forever, if that is the consequence of sin, then for Jesus Christ to pay that penalty for sin, He must be in hellfire burning for ever and ever. He would have to be because that is the supposed “penalty for sin.”

However, eternal hellfire is not the penalty of sin. The penalty of sin is death (Romans 6:23). What did Jesus do on that tree of crucifixion at the Mount of Olives? He died for us.

The Duration of “Death”

Some people say, well, the consequence of sin is to die for all eternity, to be dead for all eternity. Some denominations teach that. That is not true either, because if the consequences of sin without repentance is to be dead forever and ever and ever, well, those sins were put on Jesus’ back, that means He would have to be dead forever and ever and ever. But He was up out of the grave three days later and He is at the right hand of God the Father right now, and preparing to come back to this earth.

Christ met the penalty for sin, but the penalty for sin was death. I tell you that if you are put into a lake of fire, do you know what results? Death results. What is the lake of fire in the Book of Revelation? It is the Second Death. That is exactly what it says. Do you know what we want to make it? The second life. And not only life, we make it for all eternity. We put on a punishment for sin that the Bible does not even imagine.

If we translate the words correctly we would know in the first place that the word *aion* has a beginning and the word *aion* has an end. We would not have to worry about all of these things. It can mean a short time and it can mean a long time. The word *olam* in the Old Testament was for three days while Jonah was in the belly of the fish. It may have been a long time to him if he was conscious at the time, which I doubt seriously that he was, but if he was it must have seemed a long time. It only lasted for three days.

There will be torment in hellfire in the lake of fire, but if a human being is tossed in the lake of fire, then I doubt he will last very long. I doubt he would even feel it very much, although the word “torment” is there. But the duration only lasts for an *olam* in the Book of Isaiah, or in the Book of Revelation it is *aion*. The punishment for sin may be various means of death, by fire, by crucifixion, or whatever, and Christ went through crucifixion. The point is He died for us and that is the penalty for sin.

It says that even Gehenna will be holy one of these days. The earth and the heavens will be made over altogether. Do you know what will happen to the Lake of Fire? The Lake of Fire is equated with death, the place of the 2nd death (Revelation 2:11, 20:6, 14, 21:8). But do you know what will happen to death? **“The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death”** (1 Corinthians 15:26). Death one of these days will be abolished! If death is abolished, then the 2nd death is abolished, or the 3rd death (if there is such a thing), or the 4th or 5th. I do not know how many there are. We only read in the Scripture of 2nd death, but it does not make any difference. If death will be abolished, the 2nd death will be abolished.

It even says that hell (*hades* in Greek) and death itself will be put into this caldron called the 2nd death, which itself will be eliminated when death is eliminated, and then God will be **“all and all”**:

“The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he has put all things under his feet. But when he says all things are put under him, it is manifest that he [the son] is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.”

- **1 Corinthians 15:26–28**

What we ought to do is to read what the Scripture says on these matters. It does say, **“For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive”** (1 Corinthians 15:22). We are all from Adam, we all will die. But also it says, **“in Christ shall all be made alive.”** We will all be made alive **“in Christ.”** **“In Christ”** He will get rid of death by abolishing death. Then God will be **“all in all.”** If you get rid of death, the only thing you have left is life.

Conclusion of the Ages

“In the dispensation of the fullness of times” that Ephesians 1:10 talks about, whenever that will be, that shall be the conclusion of the **“plan of the ages,”** sometime in the future. If you know exactly when that time will be and how many ages there are in the future, please write and let us know. I am not absolutely certain. I know that there are at least two more ages after the Second Coming of Christ. The first is the millennium. There may be more. However, I know this much, there is a **“dispensation of the fullness of time”** and when that occurs — which means the conclusion of everything — then death will be abolished, completely eliminated, and all creatures within the universe will become one with God, with Christ, whether they are in the heavens or in the earth.

That is what Ephesians says. That is what Colossians says. That is what Philippians says. It means that we will all have a redemption in Christ when the **“plan of the ages”** is completed and comes to an end. The ages have a beginning, they have an end. In fact before the beginning of the ages you and I were picked out by God, ¹³ predestinated to be able to come at a certain time and to live on this earth. Then the ages began. The ages will go on, various ones will continue. Then the various ages will come to an end. Just exactly when all of that occurs is revealed in Scripture if we can look at it.

If you want to know all the details, pay attention to the Greek and the Hebrew. This doctrine of the ages is one of the most important in the Bible. We need to pay close attention to it if we want to understand how God saves us now and in the future.

The ages are the key to the plan of salvation.

Ernest L. Martin, 1984
Edited by David Sielaff, January 2005

Addendum: The **“Age of the Ages”** by David Sielaff

I believe a better understanding can be reached about the *aión* called the **“age of the ages”** if we closely examine the information available.

There is an **“age to come”** (*aión* in Greek, in Matthew 12:32; Mark 10:30; Luke 18:30; Ephesians 1:21; Hebrews 6:5; and Revelation 20:2–7) that prophetic commentators commonly refer to as the Millennium. This age begins at the return of Christ Jesus to earth, it lasts for 1,000 years, and ends with the replacing of the present heaven and earth with a new heaven and earth. The apostle Peter considered the flood to be such a transition between ages. Certainly a major change such as a new creation would mark the end of one age and the beginning of another. The **“age of the ages”** marked by that new heaven and earth also witnesses the coming down from heaven of the City of God called New Jerusalem in the Book of Revelation.

Duration of the “Great White Throne” Judgment

Last year I came across a book in Dr. Martin’s library that proposed the “**great white throne**” judgment would last for 1,000 years. I thought this was a remarkable concept that had great implications. I was soon reminded that Dr. Martin proposed the same thing in his book *The Essentials of New Testament Doctrine* in chapter 16 “The Resurrections from the Dead,” pp. 244–246. ¹⁴ As the apostle Peter wrote (with precision I might add):

“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness.”

- **2 Peter 3:10–13**

This “**day of the Lord**” that Peter referred to will be a time of judgment. These events have no relation to the Second Coming of Christ. These events occur 1,000 years after that event, immediately after the rebellion at the end of the Millennial age when Satan is loosed (Revelation 20:7–10) at the time of the dissolution of that age, and the time of the creation of the new heaven and new earth. Peter earlier said:

“But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against [until] the day of judgment and perdition [destruction] of ungodly men. But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.”

- **2 Peter 3:7–8 (citing Psalm 90:4)**

For many years of my Christian life I misunderstood the obvious statement by Peter that the subject of this passage was judgment. That is the same judgment of the “**great white throne**” put forth by John in Revelation 20:11–22:5. That “**day of judgment**” that Peter later identifies as the “**day of the Lord**” will last 1,000 years, just like the Millennium. Jesus made a significant statement on a symbolic Jewish feast day:

“In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, ‘If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believes on me, as the scripture has said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.’”

- **John 7:37–38**

Peter’s “**day of judgment**” conforms to the last “**great day**” of the Jewish autumn feast days, which relates directly to the “**age of the ages.**” That last day was the 8th day of the autumn festival, the day after the Feast of Tabernacles (which represented the rest for God’s people, the Millennium of God). It is a day of salvation.

I often wondered why the incarnation, life, death, resurrection and glorification of Jesus Christ occurred after 4,000 years of creation, with 2,000 years of life continuing for the age after that most important event in world history. Then Christ returns to rule for 1,000 years to complete a 7,000 year plan of God. This did not make sense to me. Why did Christ come to earth four-sevenths of the way through the Plan of the Ages?

However, with the insight that the **“great white throne”** judgment will last 1,000 years, suddenly everything seems to fit. Just as Christ is the center of God’s Word, ¹⁵ so too Christ comes at the crisis, the center point of history, exactly 4,000 years in the total 8,000 years. The result is there are 2,000 years after Christ’s incarnation for man to live and endure without knowledge of God or His outward presence; then comes 2,000 years of God’s nurturing and saving all mankind. ¹⁶ (There is no “age” after this, in my opinion.)

If you choose to believe that God’s plan was 7,000 years in duration, do not give up that thought! One could just as easily consider the 1,000-year **“great white throne”** judgment as the 1st day of a new “week” of creation (although “time” will lose its meaning after the ages have ended). After all, a new heaven and a new earth will inaugurate that “day.” So whether you consider the **“great white throne”** judgment as the tail-end of the 7,000-year plan of God or the beginning of a “new day” of creation, it matters little.

Consider the purpose of the **“great white throne”** judgment. It will be the period of time, **“the age of the ages,”** during which the vast majority of mankind will be reconciled to God and redeemed. **“God has concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all”** (Romans 11:32). Only a few (of which you are one) will inherit the Kingdom of God that will last from Christ’s Second Coming, through the Millennium, and through the end of the **“great white throne”** until God becomes **“all in all”** (1 Corinthians 15:28).

This view also corresponds with the **“age of the ages”** relating to the presence of God in the diagram: “The Plan of the Ages and the Temple” at <http://www.askelm.com/doctrine/d041201.htm>. Judgment will occur with God the Father and Christ being present on the new earth at New Jerusalem. At that time the bulk of humankind will be resurrected to be taught the full knowledge of God, just as Paul said will occur:

“For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge [Greek, *epignosis*, full knowledge] of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time [in their own eras or time periods].”

- **1 Timothy 2:3–6**

That **“due time”** will be the **“great white throne”** judgment ¹⁷ when tens of billions — perhaps as many as 40 billions — of people will know Christ as their God, their Mediator, their Savior, and their Ransom for sin — just as you know Him today. Get ready, be prepared, and study, study, study (2 Timothy 2:15). Though death is an enemy (1 Corinthians 15:26), **“even so in Christ shall all be made alive”** (1 Corinthians 15:22).

You will witness and participate in every event of **“the ages of the ages”**:

- (1) Christ’s Second Coming;
- (2) the Millennium and its glory;
- (3) the dissolving of the old creation;
- (4) the creation of the new heaven and earth;
- (5) the descent of New Jerusalem; the **“great white throne”** judgment; and
- (6) the final reconciliation of all to God the Father.

Even then, as I have written before, that only will be the beginning ...

“Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love him.”

- **1 Corinthians 2:9**

David Sielaff, January 2005

- 1 This statement refers to the concepts put forth in two previous articles: "The Time Periods for Salvation, Part 1" and "The Time Periods for Salvation, Part 2" originally a single 1975 booklet, 10 years before Dr. Martin spoke this message. *DWS*
- 2 From 1984 when this tape was presented. *DWS*
- 3 Note how often the word "spirit" is used 21 times in the first 27 verses of Romans chapter 8. *DWS*
- 4 See Ephesians 1:5, 9 and Philippians 2:13. *DWS*
- 5 This work first appeared in 1843 compiled by George V. Wigram. *The Englishman's Hebrew and Chaldee Concordance of the Old Testament: being an attempt at a verbal connexion between the original and the English translation; with indexes, a list of the proper names, and their occurrences, etc.*, 5th ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zoderwan Pub. House, 1974). For a more useful edition using Wigram's as a basis, see *The New Englishman's Hebrew Concordance, coded to Strong's Concordance numbering system* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1984). Many larger public libraries will have this volume. *DWS*
- 6 For a complete listing of verses where olam occurs, see Addendum 1 in the article "The Time Periods for Salvation, Part 1" at <http://www.askelm.com/doctrine/d041101.htm> . *DWS*
- 7 For the Greek New Testament, see George V. Wigram, *The Englishman's Greek Concordance of the New Testament: being an attempt at a verbal connexion between the Greek and English texts; including a concordance to the proper names; with indexes, Greek-English and English-Greek, and a concordance of various readings*, 5th ed. (London: Samuel Bagster and Sons, 1885). For a more useful modern edition using Wigram's as a basis, see *The Word Study Concordance: a modern, improved, and enlarged version of both The Englishman's Greek concordance and The new Englishman's Greek concordance: expanded to include key numbering, an alpha-numeric index, a word family index, and the cross-reference headings* by George V. Wigram and Ralph D. Winter (South Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, c1978). Many larger public libraries will have this volume. *DWS*
- 8 Neither can the adjective have a force of eternity or endlessness. *DWS*
- 9 This translation in Hebrews 1:8 comes from the Greek translation of the Old Testament called the Septuagint version. *DWS*
- 10 There were three religious and political factions of the Jews: the Scribes, the Pharisees and the Sadducees (who were the priests). *ELM*
- 11 Inserting meaning into a text is called "eisegesis" which means explaining the text with your own ideas and not the intent of the author. This is what theology has done since the 3rd and 4th centuries with false doctrines of an immortal soul, a trinity of the Godhead and an eternal punishment in hell for unbelievers. They have read those doctrines into the text. The correct study of the Bible is to extract meaning from the text. This is called "exegesis." This is done by reading the words of Scripture an the meaning proceeds out from a word, a phrase, or a passage as they are molded, Influenced, and qualified by the words around them. A study of doctrines should also note the discussions or arguments using similar words, phrases, passages and concepts as *they* are moulded by nearby elements. *DWS*

- [12](#) The ages relate to God, as He is their Creator (Hebrews 1:2). The ages do not define God. God defines the ages. Like the sabbath (Mark 2:27), the ages were created for man, not man for the ages. *DWS*
- [13](#) Dr. Martin later came to understand that the choosing or picking was done by means of a lottery. See *Essentials*, chapter 25, "How Are We Chosen?," pp. 414-416. *DWS*
- [14](#) This was somewhat disconcerting because I had forgotten - several times - what I had read, even though I went over the material of those pages of *Essentials* at least 6 times in various editions and edits. Such a good example of reading but not learning, not having the information "sink in." *DWS*
- [15](#) See the "Diagram: the Symmetry of the Bible" at <http://www.askelm.com/doctrine/reference/d050101a.htm>.
- [16](#) Also, there are 2,000 years after the flood until Christ's incarnation, and 2,000 years after Christ, until His Second Coming.
- [17](#) This will not be a black throne of punishment only (although there will be "**destruction**," of evildoers, 2 Peter 3:7), rather it will be more of a "**great white throne**" judgment of education and correction.