

The Ages

I. Introduction & Definition

A. English Terms

1. A period of time dominated by a central figure or prominent feature.
2. A period in history or human progress (the age of exploration).
3. A cultural period marked by the prominence of a particular item (the bronze age).
4. A division of geologic time (the ice age).

synonymy PERIOD, EPOCH, ERA, AGE mean a division of time. PERIOD may designate an extent of time of any length (periods of economic prosperity) . EPOCH applies to a period begun or set off by some significant or striking quality, change, or series of events (the steam engine marked a new epoch in industry) . ERA suggests a period of history marked by a new or distinct order of things (the era of global communications) . AGE is used frequently of a fairly definite period dominated by a prominent figure or feature (the age of Samuel Johnson) .

B. Hebrew Terms

1. **אָלָם** ‘owlam^{#5769}: long duration, antiquity, futurity, for ever.
2. **אֲלָם** ‘alam^{#5957}: Aram. for^{#5769}.
3. The Hebrew term can refer to long (even eternal) times past (Deut. 32:7; Job 22:15; Isa. 64:4), or long (even eternal) times future (Ps. 89:1; 1st Kgs. 2:33). God’s Eternal Life is thus defined (Ps. 90:2).
4. The term also can refer to a long period of time in the present. Postbiblical Jewish writings refer to the present world of toil as *hā’ōlām hazzeh* and to the world to come as *hā’ōlām habbā’*.

C. Greek Terms

1. **αἰών**^{#165}: an age, era. Signifies a period of indefinite duration, or time viewed in relation to what takes place in the period. The force attaching to the word is not so much that of the actual length of a period, but that of a period marked by spiritual or moral characteristics.
2. The plural **αἰώνιας** often refers to eternity—both past and future.
3. **αἰώνιος**^{#166}: adj. eternal.
4. As with the Hebrew term, the Greek term can have reference to ages past (even eternally past), ages future (even eternity future), or ages present.

D. Ages **are not** the same as Dispensations.

1. Because the Gentile stewardship was followed by the Hebrew stewardship, and followed by the Church stewardship in an observed sequence, Dispensations are sometimes thought of as time-frames.
2. An **οἰκονομία**^{#3622} stewardship is concerned with the administration or management responsibility that God bestows upon particular groups or individuals, and has no inherent time-factor.
3. When the two terms are used together, it is best to think of certain ages *within* the scope of particular dispensations. [Example: The Dispensation of the Hebrews includes the Age of Promise, Age of Law, Age of the Incarnation, and the Age of Tribulation]

II. Development & Application

A. When the scope of the passage is eternal, there are only three ages (Jude 25).

1. Eternity Past (Jn. 9:32).
2. Temporal Present (“this age”) (Matt. 12:32; Mk. 10:30).
 - a. The sons of this age are the unbelievers with no eternal perspective (Lk. 16:8; 1st Tim. 6:17).
 - b. Believers with an eternal perspective understand that the sacrifices of this age will produce rewards in the age to come (eternity future) (Lk. 18:30; Tit. 2:12; Heb. 6:5).
 - c. Believers can fall away from this walk of faith, when they allow their love for this present age to cause the shipwreck of their faith (2nd Tim. 4:10).
 - d. The sons of this age are the unbelievers with no eternal resurrection (Lk. 20:34-36).
 - e. The debater of this age is the unbeliever with no eternal perspective, who seeks to find meaning and purpose in worldly wisdom (logic and/or philosophy) (1st Cor. 1:20).
 - f. The “wise in this age” are the unbelievers with no eternal perspective, who are blinded to the eternal truth of God’s Word (1st Cor. 3:18).
 - g. God’s wisdom is eternal, and therefore not a wisdom of this age (1st Cor. 2:6).
 - h. The rulers of this age are the fallen angels who have taken the kingdom by force, but who are not going to remain in their power for much longer (1st Cor. 2:6,8; Matt. 11:12; Lk. 4:6).
 - i. Satan is the god of this age (2nd Cor. 4:4), and thus this age is called “evil” (Gal. 1:4).
 - j. This age has a certain end, with eternal judgment for its conclusion (Matt. 13:39,40,49).
3. Eternity Future (“the age to come” or “the ages of the ages”) (Matt. 12:32; Mk. 10:30; Rom. 1:25; 9:5; 11:36).

- B. When the scope of the passage is limited, there are many ages in the unfolding grace eternal plan of the ages for the maximum glorification of the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 16:25; 1st Cor. 2:7).
1. The ages are a part of the creative work of Jesus Christ (Heb. 1:2; 11:3).
 2. The perfect timing for the sacrificial work of the God-Man Kinsman-Redeemer is described as “the consummation of the ages” (Heb. 9:26).
 3. The ends (purposes) of the (previous) ages has come (to be revealed to) the Church (1st Cor. 10:11).
 4. These previous ages kept mystery doctrine hidden (Rom. 16:25; Eph. 3:9; Col. 1:26).
 5. Each limited age has an end, which features human failure, but produces Divine glory for Jesus Christ (Matt. 24:3; 28:20).
 6. The ages to come will manifest surpassing riches of His grace as the Church is exalted in Christ throughout the Tribulation, Millennium, and Fulness of Times (Eph. 2:7).

III. Summary & Conclusion

- A. Believers are expected to be knowledgeable concerning God’s grace eternal plan of the ages for the maximum glory of the Lord Jesus Christ (Matt. 16:3; Lk. 24:18; Rom. 11:25; 1st Cor. 10:1,11; 1st Thess. 4:13).
- B. The Lord Jesus Christ is blessed “unto the ages” (forever) (Rom. 1:25; 9:5; 2nd Cor. 11:31).
- C. The Lord Jesus Christ (and through Him, the Father) is glorified “unto the ages” (Rom. 11:36; 16:27; Gal. 1:5; Eph. 3:21; Phil. 4:20; 1st Tim. 1:17; 2nd Tim. 4:18; Heb. 13:21; 1st Pet. 4:11; 5:11; 2nd Pet. 3:18; Jude 25; Rev. 1:6; 5:13).