

Lesson Two – Time vs. Eternity

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Most people understand what is meant by *time*. We see *time* as measurable intervals of finite duration, with beginnings and endings, and with clocks and calendars to mark its passage. Time, as we presently know it, is divided into measurable units based on the movement of visible celestial bodies, e.g. the earth’s movement around the sun marks our calendar year and the earth’s rotation on its axis as it moves around the sun marks our day. The common assumption is that *time* will continue on perpetually, uninterrupted.

Most Christians view time in this manner also. The difference is that most Christians believe that at some point in time yet future there will be an intervention by God Himself. When this intervention occurs, (they believe) time as we know it will cease, and *eternity* will begin. This idea of eternity takes the concept of finite into the concept of infinite; the measurable into the immeasurable; beginnings and endings cease to exist. Along with this view, most Christians believe that when a Christian’s earthly body dies, he or she enters into Heaven where eternity exists, and thus enters into eternity also. Under this viewpoint, for the departed there would be no more *time*, as it presently exists.

But is this scriptural? Do the Scriptures indicate that we should think in this manner? Did the original authors and cultures think in this manner? That is precisely what we need to find out, and we need to rely on God’s Word to answer these questions.

Problems most often occur from misunderstandings concerning the concept of *time* versus the concept of *eternity*. And because of these problems, Christian terms such as *eternal life* have gotten misconstrued. In this week’s Lesson we will study precisely how we are to view time and eternity according to the Scriptures, which will then allow us to understand such important biblical terms as *eternal life* and *eternal salvation* more accurately.

Study well this week and begin each study session in prayer. Also make sure that you read and study each and every Scripture that is presented. And if necessary, read the context of each as well. This will help to ensure that it is the Holy Spirit through the Word of God that is doing the teaching, not the word of man.

As helpful as Bible studies are *as tools*, they cannot replace proper engagement with and knowledge of the God-breathed Word.

Let's begin!

Day One – God's Structure of Time, Part I

Today's lesson is a bit lengthy, so please allow yourself plenty of time to be thorough in your study time. I do apologize for the high expectations I will be placing on you throughout this study, but remember that you can be flexible with daily studies and perhaps stretch these single study days into multiple study days. The important thing here is that you become familiar with the Scriptures and see the big picture God paints throughout. If it takes you longer than expected, that is perfectly okay!

To begin to understand God's structure of *time*, let's start at the very beginning, in the Book of Genesis –

Genesis 1:1

In the beginning, God created [01254] the heavens and the earth.

In the original Hebrew rendering of this verse, the “the” that is placed before “beginning” is not actually there. Therefore, we should literally read it this way –

Genesis 1:1

In beginning, God created [01254] the heavens and the earth.

Genesis 1:1 states that at some point *in beginning*, God created the heavens and the earth. The distinction of *the* beginning versus simply *beginning* is important to see because we are not looking at **the** beginning of *all things, ever*. We are simply being told about *a* beginning, presumably among other beginnings, that serves as a demarcation in time.

And even though we see a definite point in time recorded here, we must assume that since God does not have a beginning, some sort of *eternity past* existed before the creation of the heavens and the earth. From a Biblical standpoint though, we are simply not privy to this information (other than what is implied by God's eternal nature). Because of this we will not be spending any study time on the idea of an eternity past. What is essentially important to us is that God has revealed to us in His Word *a structure of time* that consists of days and years and *ages* that He constructed for a specific purpose. Another thing to keep in mind is that Scripture is God's Word *to* man, *for* man, *about* man; because of this, what we read about God's work concerning the heavens and the earth must be directly related *to man*. Please keep all of this in mind in the many days and weeks to come.

Right after we read about God creating the heavens and the earth, the earth is mentioned in this way –

Genesis 1:2a

And the earth was [01961] formless [08414] and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep...

The Hebrew word for “was” is *hayah* (01961). Along with being translated as “was,” this word can also be translated as “became” and is so quite often throughout the Old Testament. How can we be sure which translation it should be in this particular verse – *was* the earth formless and void when it was created, or did it *become* formless and void after its creation? The proper translation of this little word makes a huge difference in how we are to interpret this verse.

The following verse offers us God’s own commentary on the event in Genesis 1:2a. This tells us unmistakably which verb should be used –

Isaiah 45:18

For thus says the Lord, who created [01254] the heavens (He is the God who formed the earth and made it, He established it and did not create [01254] it a waste place [08414]. But formed it to be inhabited)...

Notice that the same Hebrew words are used in this verse as in Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2. Using the Lexicon located in your Appendix, write down the definitions for these words.

1. create (01254) –

2. formless/waste place (08414) –

What does Isaiah 45:18 tell us about the earth?

Compare this comment with the description of the earth seen in Genesis 1:2a. Was the earth a waste place when it was created? Or did the earth *become* a waste place?

Comparing Isaiah 45:18 with Genesis 1:2a clearly shows us that God did not *create* (which literally means to make something out of nothing) the earth a “waste place/formless.” Since Genesis 1:1 states that God *created* the heavens and the earth at a point in the past, and v. 2 states the condition of the earth as *a waste place*, we can clearly see that the earth “*became* formless and void [Lit., a ruin].” The earth must have become ruined at some point *subsequent* to its initial creation; therefore, the word “was” is a faulty translation. (If you do not see this then it may be a good idea to read through the previous verses and questions again.)

Further on in Genesis chapter one, we read that the Spirit moved over the ruined creation, shaping it and restoring it and bringing forth *life* (plants, animals, and man). Thus Isaiah 45:18b says, “But [God] formed it [*restored it*] to be inhabited...”

So what happened that made the earth in such a condition? Why and how did it become *formless and void* and why did God restore it to be inhabited? The answer can be found by looking closely at other Scriptures, so let’s take a look at the following passage in the Book of Ezekiel –

Ezekiel 28:11-19

11 Again the word of the Lord came to me saying, **12** “Son of man, take up a lamentation over the king of Tyre, and say to him, ‘Thus says the Lord God, “You had the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. **13** You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering: the ruby, the topaz, and the diamond; the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper; the lapis lazuli, the turquoise, and the emerald; and the gold, the workmanship of your settings and sockets, was in you. On the day that you were created they were prepared. **14** You were the anointed cherub who covers, and I placed you there. You were on the holy mountain of God; you walked in the midst of the stones of fire. **15** You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created, until unrighteousness was found in you.

16 By the abundance of your trade you were internally filled with violence, and you sinned; therefore I have cast you as profane from the mountain of God. And I have destroyed you O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. **17** Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom by reason of your splendor. I cast you to the ground; I put you before kings, that they may see you. **18** By the multitude of your iniquities, in the unrighteousness of your trade, you profaned your sanctuaries. Therefore I have brought fire from the midst of you; it has consumed you, and I have turned you to ashes on the earth in the eyes of all who see you. **19** All who know you among the peoples are appalled at you; you have become terrified, and you will be no more.””

At first glance this passage appears to be talking about a physical person known as the “king of Tyre.” However, there are certain things mentioned here that indicate otherwise. For instance, the king of Tyre is described as being “created” [01254], and all of mankind, aside from Adam and Eve, was *pro-created* (that is, God did not individually “create out of nothing” each human being as he did Adam). The king of Tyre is also called a “cherub,” and that word is only used in Scripture to describe celestial beings, i.e. *angels*. We also read that God placed this “king of Tyre” in Eden, the garden of God, and we know that Eden did not exist at the time of the real (human) king of Tyre. Therefore, this passage directed towards the “king of Tyre” should be seen as *a direct lamentation spoken against Satan*, the one ultimately seen as pulling the puppet-strings of the “prince of Tyre” (see vv. 1-10).

There is a *positive* description of Satan in Ezekiel 28:12-15. How is he described?

Then something happened which changed that. What happened (vv. 15-17)?

Then how is Satan described (vv. 17-19)?

It is necessary at this point that you understand *scripturally* what transpired concerning Satan's rebellion and subsequent judgment, as well as the creation of man in light of it. This study is primarily designed to be used by those already somewhat familiar with certain foundational material; therefore, I will not be going into detail concerning this topic. If you need to study further, either for review or for instruction, please see the study titled UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE – BIBLICAL SURVEY, Lessons Three and Four. I have included that portion of the study in the Appendix.

To give a brief summation, Lucifer (a.k.a. Satan) was the original messianic angel appointed to rule over the earth from the heavens (Ezek. 28:14) at some point in time past *after* the initial creation of the heavens and the earth mentioned in Genesis 1:1. He subsequently sinned by seeking to exalt his throne above God's Throne (cf. Isa. 14:12-14; Ezek. 28:15-16). Because of Satan's sin, his sanctuaries – the heavens over the earth, and the earth itself – were profaned (Lit., defiled or polluted; Ezek. 28:18). This left the earth in its formless and chaotic state as seen in Genesis 1:2a.

God then restored the earth (cf. Gen. 1:2b – Gen. 2:3) in order for it to be inhabited by mankind (Isa. 45:18), whom He created to rule over it (Gen. 1:26, 28; Psalm 8:3-7). Man was tested for his worthiness to rule by being expected to obey God's command concerning not eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:16-17). Man failed the test and was thus disqualified from ruling (cf. Gen. 3:14-19; I Tim. 2:13-14). It is no small matter that Satan was directly responsible for this, as he was seeking to keep his position as ruler.

Satan retained his status as ruler over the world because the ones created to take his place had become disqualified by their act of disobedience. Although Satan is himself a disobedient and disqualified ruler, he remains the anointed ruler of this world, and will continue ruling until the rightful rulers take their place (cf. John 14:30; 2 Cor. 4:4; Job 1:7; 2:2; Eph. 6:12).

This is a crucial element in the thought process of constructing a picture of *time*. Again to review, Satan was created a perfect angel *at some point in time past*, and he was created to rule over this world. He then sinned and brought a judgment upon his sanctuaries (that which he ruled over, the heavens and the earth) and himself. After his rebellion, he is spoken of as profane, corrupted, and unrighteous. Consequently, the earth and the heavens surrounding the earth had need of restoration (for the earth had *become* a waste place), and at a later time were then restored *in order to* bring another ruler on the scene to take Satan's place, *marking another point in time*. Please keep this in mind. (And please make sure that you understand the preceding paragraphs before you go any further.)

It is absolutely crucial to view the opening 33 verses of Scripture (Genesis 1:2b – 2:3) accurately, *as a reference to a restoration and not the initial creation*. We will see why God set things up this way shortly, but for now let's focus on God's construct of time as He instituted what we know of as *days* –

Genesis 1:5

And called the light day, and the darkness He called night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day.

Genesis 1:8

And God called the expanse heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, a second day.

Genesis 1:11-13

11 Then God said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit after their kind, with seed in them, on the earth"; and it was so. 12 And the earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed after their kind, and trees bearing fruit,

with seed in them, after their kind; and God saw that it was good. 13 And there was evening and there was morning, a third day.

Then we read about the fourth day –

Genesis 1:14

Then God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night, and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days and years...”

What did God do on the fourth day?

On the fourth day, God *let there be* lights in the heavens (the visible sky), i.e. *celestial bodies* – the *markers of time* as we now know it.

Days five and six consist of God’s work of creating life, both animals and man. Then after God completes His six days of work, He concisely and deliberately sums it all up –

Genesis 2:1-3

1 Thus the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their hosts. 2 And by the seventh day God completed His work which He had done; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. 3 Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.

List everything that God states about the seventh day.

Quite repetitive, isn’t it? And as is God’s way throughout the Scriptures, He consistently repeats Himself in order to make His intentions and purposes clear. We can see this same repetitive format in the following passage taken from Exodus chapter twenty. These commandments were given by God to His people in order to instruct them concerning how to think, and how to act, *in order to get them to see, think, and act in accordance with His perspective*.

Exodus 20:8-11

8 Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is a Sabbath of the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you. 11 For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

What is God’s focus here?

How is this tied into the opening structure of Genesis?

In the beginning of God's Word we see God set up *time as we know it*. Not only did He set in place the visible "time" markers (e.g. stars, moon, and sun) to structure man's 24-hour days, 7-day weeks, and 365-day years, but He did it all with a specific reference to the *seven-day construct*. In doing it this way, God established a pattern of six "days" of work, ending with a seventh "day" of rest. This seven-day construct that God established in the beginning (*relating to time as we know it*) all had to do with God's restoration of a fallen creation – the heavens and the earth. God then puts His focus on the seventh day because in it He rested. He then shows man that he too must put his focus on the seventh day – that which follows six days of work – and the "rest" contained therein.

And this of course is all for a reason! And tomorrow we'll see exactly why.

See you then.

Day Two – God's Structure of Time, Part II

We should now see that God's structure of time *as it relates to restoration* consists of six days of work, ending with a seventh day of rest. God's particular focus is on the seventh day, wherein the rest occurs from all the previous work. Today we will see how this plays out in the bigger picture.

If we were to give a close inspection of Biblical genealogies, we would determine that approximately six thousand years have passed since the original restoration of the heavens and the earth took place.³ Immediately after this restoration, wherein God created man for the purpose of ruling, man sinned, fell, and became another *ruined creation*. God then began the process of restoring man.

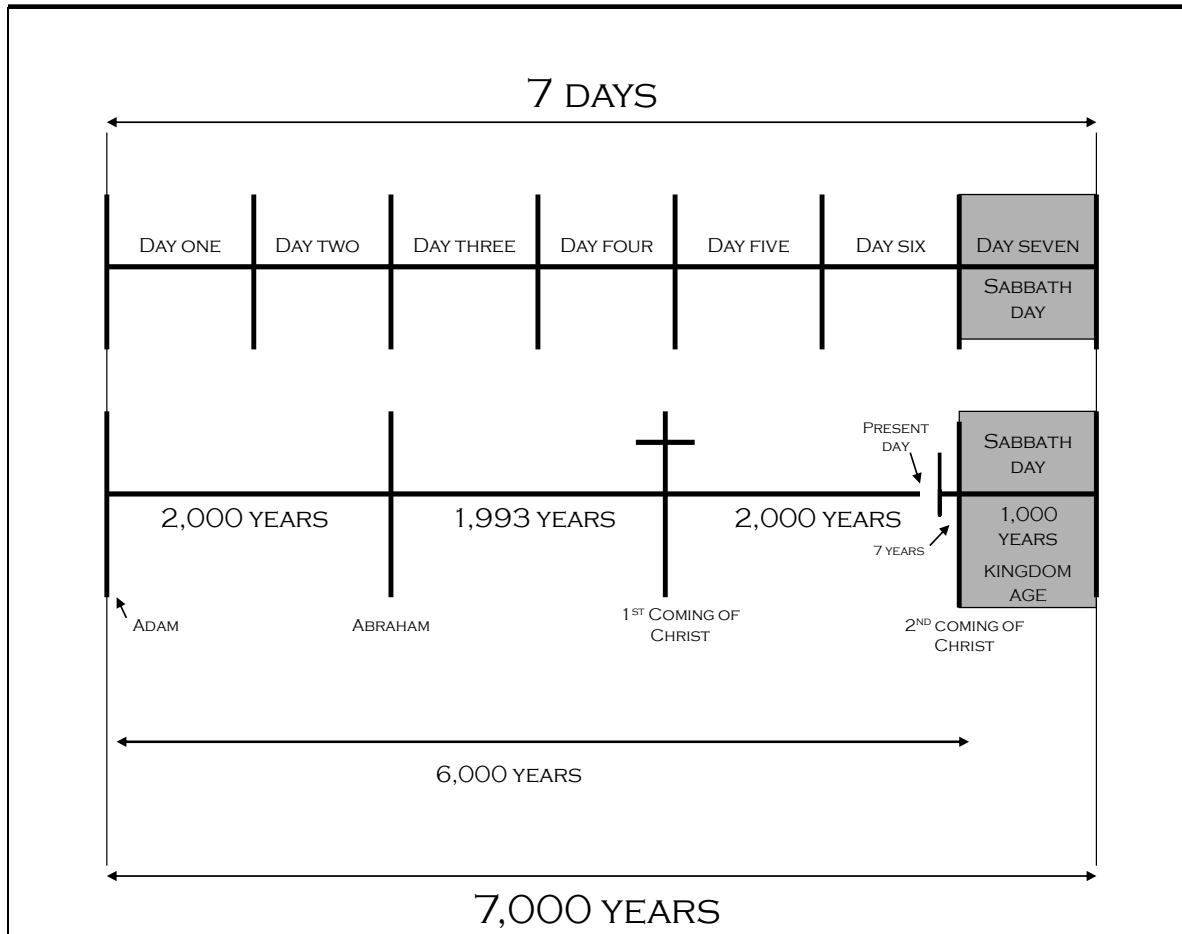
This is no small matter! *Approximately six thousand years have passed since man's fall and God's subsequent process of restoring man*. And if we were to study the history presented in the Scriptures (as well as the time which has passed since the Scriptures were written), we would see these six thousand years divided into specific periods marked by specific events.

Please read the next verse and the corresponding chart on the next page –

II Peter 3:8

But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

³ Because this study is designed to deal with comprehensive thoughts and ideas, we will not be going into details concerning the genealogies. However, this is a worthy study to do at some point in time in your studies. There are many tools available to help you in this endeavor at www.cornerstonelosgatos.com, www.cornerstonejacksonville.com, or www.lampbroadcast.org.



The top line of the chart containing the seven segments labeled “Days” corresponds with the foundational restoration account of the ruined heavens and earth seen in Genesis 1:2-2:3. You can see that the Seventh Day is called the Sabbath Day, *the Day of Rest*, as it corresponds with God resting on the seventh day after working for six days. God then gave to the nation of Israel strict laws and commands concerning the seventh day, for God wanted man’s focus to be on *this particular day*.

Recalling II Peter 3:8, you should be able to see the connection between “a thousand years” and “one day” as labeled on the second line of the chart. Peter’s statement is not a poetic rendering of God’s eternal nature as so many of us may have been taught. Its meaning is clearly set forth by Peter himself (check context!) as he admonished the Church not to be unaware or deceived about the promise of Christ’s return. In this sense he is stating that God is not slow about His promises, but is keeping to His predetermined plan of six days of restorative work (a 6,000-year period of time), followed by a seventh day of rest from work (a 1,000- year period of time).

The seventh *day*, which lasts *a thousand years* (also called “the day of the Lord”), is briefly explained in the following passage. (This passage being just one of many throughout the Scriptures describing this coming “day of the Lord.”)

Revelation 20:1-10

1 And I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. **2** And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and

Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, 3 and threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he should not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time.

4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. 5 The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection. 6 Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.

7 And when the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, 8 and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore. 9 And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints of the beloved city, and fire came down from heaven and devoured them. 10 And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

Please use the above text to answer the following questions:

Who is reigning during this thousand years (v. 6)?

Where will Satan be during this time (vv. 2 and 3)?

What happens after the thousand years (vv. 7-10)?

The end of this thousand-year period is described this way –

Revelation 21:1-4; 23-25

1 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. 2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He shall dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them, 4 and He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.”

23 And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb. 24 And the nations shall walk by its light, and the

kings of the earth shall bring their glory into it. 25 And in the daytime (for there shall be no night there) its gates shall never be closed...

What happens to the first heaven and the first earth at the end of this thousand-year period?

According to vv. 2 and 3, where does God dwell *after* the thousand-year reign of Christ is complete?

Does it appear that the marking of the passage of time *as we presently know it* (e.g. days, seasons, and years), will still exist *after* the thousand-year reign of Christ ends (vv. 1, 23-25)? Explain.

We'll end right here for today. For the remainder of the week we will be delving into a more detailed look at the English word *eternal* and see that its definition needs to be more clearly understood within this seven-day structure of *time* – a structure of time relating *directly to* the restoration of God's ruined creation. This seven-day structure absolutely must be in place first, so make sure that you understand and remember what you've learned today, for you'll need it to build on tomorrow.

See you then!

Day Three – Age

As we have learned, God teaches knowledge “line upon line; here a little, and there a little” (Isa. 28:10) to His people who are ready and willing to move on from the milk. Today we will begin to understand the definition of *eternal* by grabbing a little information here and a little information there. Each Scripture given will add another line, another “connecting cord,” so to speak, concerning how we are to view this word. As we do this we must keep in mind the *God-given* seven-day structure of *time*, which relates directly to God's restoration process of His ruined creation. It may be necessary for you to review yesterday's work as we go along; if that is the case, please take the time to do so. Also, please do not skip prayer time as you study, and remember to call upon the Lord *frequently* to teach you and guide you through His Word. I remind you simply because it can sometimes be easy to forget this step.

The word that is translated as “eternal” in the English translations of the New Testament is the Greek word *aiōnios*. The first thing that we need to understand about this word is that it is the adjective form of the Greek noun *aion*. In order to understand the scriptural definition of “eternal” we will first need to define

the noun form of this word.⁴ This is what we will be doing today. An example of why this is an effective way to understand an adjective which has been made from a noun can be seen using the example of the words *rock* (noun) and *rocky* (adjective). We can understand what *rocky* means by defining what a *rock* is. (*Hair* and *hairy* is another example.) Notice that as one moves from the noun form of the word to the adjective form, the *definition of the word does not change*; its grammatical usage does. To repeat, as we move from the noun form of the word to the adjective form, the definition of the word *does not change*; only its grammatical usage changes. Therefore, the adjective “eternal” must be the same as its noun form, “age.” Please remember this as we continue.

The Greek noun *aion* (165) is translated into our English Bibles as “age” and sometimes “world.” The most accurate translation is really “age.” In Scripture, when *aion* is used as a noun it is most often used in its singular form with a definite article (“the”). The definite article is many times *not* translated into the English even though it may be present in the original language. This is an important piece of information to know, as the inclusion of a definite article in the Greek language is intentional in order to stress a particular identity, e.g. *the* chair as opposed to *a* chair. Since many English versions drop the “the” that exists with specific nouns, we miss out on much of the intended focus.

The following verses that we will be studying all use the noun *aion* in its singular form with a definite article (unless indicated otherwise). It is extremely important that we study this word *according to the way Scripture defines it*. (I really can’t stress that enough!)

Let’s put this picture together, *line upon line*, by beginning with the following passage –

I Corinthians 2:6-8

6 Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away; 7 but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom, which God predestined before the ages to our glory; 8 the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory...

Verse 7 tells us that there existed some sort of passage of “time” *before* the ages (*ages* – plural). Then v. 8 speaks of this *current* age, which is distinct from the previous ages.

Therefore, *this age had a beginning*.

Verse 6 tells us that the *rulers of this age* are passing away. Let’s take a look at some other references concerning the present rulers of this age –

Ephesians 6:12 (KJV)

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world [Lit., the age], against spiritual wickedness in high places [Lit., in the heavenlies].

II Corinthians 4:3-4

3 And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, 4 in whose case the god of this world [Lit., the age] has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

⁴ The Strong’s lexicon definitions are sometime not altogether accurate. The word *eternal* is one such case. Therefore it is necessary to build its definition scripturally, using God’s own commentary and usage.

Ephesians 6:12 clearly states that dark, wicked forces in the heavenlies (forces that are *not* flesh and blood, but spirit) are ruling this age. II Corinthians 4:4 clearly states that the god of this age has a purpose that is opposite to God's purpose. Who is the god of this age, and who are the rulers of the darkness of this age?

Drawing from what we studied yesterday, were there always *wicked* spiritual forces ruling in high places, with an agenda that is opposite to God's?

Of course not! God did not create angelic beings *evil* and then set them in the heavens to rule over us. Satan was created *perfect*, but his pride and subsequent self-elevation brought about his fall, as well as one-third of his angels who joined him (cf. Isa. 14:12-15; Rev. 12:4). He and his angels are described as wicked forces in the heavens ruling *this age*. Let's notice something else about "this age" –

Romans 12:2

And do not be conformed to this world [Lit., this age], but be transformed by the renewing of your mind...

Scripture is clearly telling us (Christians) *not* to conform to (Lit., pattern ourselves after) this age. What does this tell you about this current age?

So clearly this age had a beginning, and this age is being ruled by spiritual forces *of wickedness* from the heavens, *and Satan is the god of this age*. Therefore, **we** are not to pattern ourselves after this age. Remembering the seven-day construct and the restoration account of the ruined creation in Genesis 1:2b – 2:3, when do you suppose that *this age* began? Why do you think so?

It is quite accurate to say that *this current age* began when God began the six-day of restoration (with a seventh day of rest) in Genesis, wherein we find the heavens and the earth being restored, and man being created to replace the fallen ruler Satan, who was at that time (and continues to be) *wicked*. This age began 6,000 years ago.

The following verses will add more to this picture –

Matthew 13:39-40

39 ...and the enemy who sowed them is the devil, and the harvest is the end of the age and the reapers are angels. 40 Therefore just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age.

Here's another interesting aspect concerning the word "age." Scripture has just told us that there is *an end* to this current age, and *this age* will end *with a harvest*.

Read the following Scriptures to determine the context of the harvest –

Matthew 13:36-43

36 Then He left the multitudes, and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him, saying, “Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field.” 37 And He answered and said, “The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man, 38 and the field is the world; and as for the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; and the tares are the sons of the evil one; 39 and the enemy who sowed them is the devil, and the harvest is the end of the age (literally, the age) and the reapers are angels. 40 Therefore just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age.

41 The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness, 42 and will cast them in to the furnace of fire; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 43 Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.”

What is accomplished with the harvest, which happens *at the end of this age* (v. 41)?

What happens after the “stumbling blocks” are removed (*at the end of this age*, v. 43)?

This current age, which began 6,000 years ago, *ends with a harvest* – a harvest in which the tares will be separated from the wheat. And *after* the harvest at the end of this age (v. 43), the righteous (after they’ve been separated from the lawless) will shine forth in the kingdom. Do you recall from Day Two that the kingdom of Christ which lasts 1,000 years is established after Satan is bound up and thrown in the abyss? Do you see the connection with the timeline we studied yesterday? *This age* (which is ruled by Satan and his angels) ends *prior to* the establishment of the kingdom, which takes place on the Seventh Day. This age ends not only with the removal of Satan and his angels from their positions of rulership (Rev. 20:1-10), but this age ends with the “righteous” “sons of the kingdom” *shining forth in the kingdom*, for 1,000 years. This keeps us nicely in harmony with our timeline – 6,000 years of work followed by 1,000 years of rest, *totaling 7,000 years of “time” allotted for restoration.*

Now at this point I am hoping that you’ve been utilizing your math skills, because you should be able to see that *we are very near the end of the 6,000 years.* And if we are near the end of the 6,000 years, what should we be expecting to come next?

Continuing with our quest to scripturally define the word “age,” let’s read a few more verses that broaden our picture just a bit –

Ephesians 1:21

...far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the one to come.

Matthew 12:31-32

31 “Therefore I say to you, any sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven men, but blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven. 32 And whoever shall speak a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whoever shall speak against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, either in this age, or in the age to come.”

Notice that there is a specific *singular age* that is coming! These Scripture passages tell us that this *coming age* will follow after this present age. Since this present age will end with a harvest (Matt. 13:39-40) just prior to the establishment of Christ’s kingdom (Matt. 13:41-43), and Christ’s kingdom will last one thousand years (Rev. 20:4-6), what is the coming age?

Scripturally speaking, can the word “age” be defined as *time unending*? In other words, can the word “age” be synonymous with our idea of eternity?

And can the *coming age* be viewed in any way as synonymous with our concept of eternity?

How would you then define the word “age”?

A very simple, clear, and *scriptural* definition of age is “a long period of time with a beginning and an end.” In no way does Scripture present the word “age,” *specifically this age or the next*, as time unending.

As we close for today, let’s summarize a few things we have learned so far concerning the noun, “age” – *specifically as it relates to this age and the next* – through the study of the Scriptures:

- This age *had a beginning*.
- This age is presently being ruled by wicked, spiritual forces that were not always wicked.
- The god of this age is Satan.
- Christians must not pattern themselves after this age.
- This age *has an ending*.
- This age will last 6,000 years, corresponding with the 6 days of work seen in the restoration account in Genesis.
- This age will end *prior to* the establishment of Christ’s kingdom.
- This age will end with a separation of people: those that commit lawlessness will not have a part in the kingdom, but those who are righteous, *who have not committed lawlessness*, will.⁵

⁵ At this point we are not going to define who the “lawless” are, or who the “righteous” are. We can simply say that there is a separation of people, *based on their works*, at the end of this age. This separation has to do with who will have a part in the kingdom, and who will not.

- Satan and his angels, the wicked spiritual forces in the heavenly places, will *not* be a part of this coming kingdom; Satan will be dethroned prior to the establishment of Christ's kingdom, and held in the abyss for the duration (Rev. 20:3).
- The coming age is the Kingdom of Christ.
- The coming age will last 1,000 years – *one day* – corresponding with the seventh day of rest seen in the restoration account in Genesis.

This picture should really be getting clearer for you, and a clear and accurate picture of the definition of the noun, “age” is necessary to have in order to move on to tomorrow’s lesson. If necessary, spend the remainder of your study time going back over the Scriptures used in today’s lesson and reference the bullet points as you do so.

Keep up the good work and I’ll see you tomorrow!

Day Four – Eternal

Please pray for strength and knowledge as we proceed with today’s study. It is no insignificant thing that most of us have a misunderstanding of the scriptural concept of the word *eternal*. So this may not be only an exercise in building knowledge, it may also be an exercise in *unlearning* knowledge. The Spirit will only teach truth so it is imperative that you lean not on your own understanding, but the wisdom which comes from the depths of God.

The Greek word *aionios* (166) is most often translated in our Bibles as “eternal,” but sometimes is translated as “everlasting.” This word is the adjective form of the noun *aion*. Let’s remember the definition we’ve just learned of the noun *aion* – it should literally be understood as *a long period of time with a beginning and an end*. AND REMEMBER, as we go from the noun form of a word to the adjective form, *the definition of the word does not change*, its grammatical usage does (e.g. rock vs. rocky). As we continue to study, please keep that in mind.

This next passage is most helpful, as it contains both the noun *aion* and the adjective *aionios* in the same sentence –

Luke 18:29-30

29 And He said to them, “Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, 30 who shall not receive many times as much at this time and in the age [*aion*] to come, eternal [*aionios*] life.”

According to this passage, what will the person who has left everything *for the kingdom of God* receive?

According to v. 30b, when will this person receive this “eternal life”?

Drawing from what you've learned so far this week, what is "the age to come" and how long does it last?

The word translated in v.30 as "eternal" is the Greek word *aionios*, which is the adjective form of the Greek noun *aion*. Again, drawing from yesterday's study, what is the definition of the word *aion*?

What is the difference in the two concepts: age vs. eternal?

Can you see the discrepancy in this verse through the mistranslation of the word *aionios*? Explain.

How then should Luke 18:29-30 be understood *literally*?

Verse 30 *should* be translated "...and in the age to come, age-lasting life [or life for the age]." This Biblical phrase, "eternal life" is clearly *not exclusively* the idea of life *forever and ever*, as so many Christians think. In the preceding context its meaning is clear – "eternal life" is **life in the age to come**, or more aptly, *age-lasting* life in the kingdom which is coming. (And remember, this is still within the structure of *time* as we saw on our chart, because the seven-day construct of *time* has to do with *restoration*.)

(Please note that we are still talking about *time* as it is presented by the Biblical timeline chart we studied; *time that was established within a seven-day structure*. Time as we know it ends at the close of the seventh day. Then we have what begins a succession of ages that continues on, each following after the other. Remember that an age is a period of time [of varying and sometimes unknown duration] with a definite beginning and end. This present age is currently being ruled by wicked forces in the heavenlies, but the establishment of the kingdom of Christ [the age to come] will rid them of their positions. The Christians' participation as a co-heir with Christ during that age is a direct result of whether they have received **life and salvation** *for that coming age*. If they have not, they do not participate. This is a life and a salvation *pertaining to rewards* in the coming kingdom of Christ.

So what happens *after* the seventh day? Who has a part in that? Does one still need life and salvation for those ages? Yes! And that **life** and that **salvation** is exactly what is meant by and given through what we know as *salvation by grace through faith*. [We will deal more with this concept in the coming Lessons.] This life and salvation is given to all who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ [cf. Acts 16:30]; *all Christians already possess this life and salvation unto the ages*. It is a life and salvation that continues into the future ages, what the Scriptures call “forever” or “forever and ever.” [Please make sure you grasp what this is saying, which is essentially this: there is a life and a salvation pertaining to the coming Kingdom of Christ, and there is a separate life and salvation that pertains to the ages *after* the Kingdom of Christ.]

However, the focus of Scripture is the seven-day structure, not the ages occurring after the Seventh Day [although they are of course important]. God has structured His Word with a particular emphasis on His people keeping their eyes on the coming Seventh Day; *that is the focus*. All things move toward that Seventh Day, the Kingdom of Christ.)

Let’s continue with a few more instances in which the phrase “eternal life” is used –

Galatians 6:8

8 For the one who sows to his own flesh shall from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit shall from the Spirit reap eternal [*aionios*] life. 9 And let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we shall reap if we do not grow weary.

I Timothy 6:12

Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal [*aionios*] life to which you were called...

Titus 3:7

...that being justified by His grace we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal [*aionios*] life.

Galatians 6:8 states from Whom we will reap *aionios* life. It also presents a condition for reaping *eternal* life. What does v. 8 say?

The Book of I Timothy is a letter written by Paul to his fellow Christian worker, Timothy. Paul instructs Timothy to take hold of *aionios* life (i.e. *work for it*). What else does Paul say about *aionios* life?

Titus 3:7 presents some conditions surrounding *eternal* life as well. What does this verse say?

Notice from these verses that *aionios* life (“eternal life”) is clearly being spoken of in terms of *doing work* to get it, and the receiving of this *life for an age* is future, for “in due time” we shall reap it from the Spirit. However, we will receive “eternal life” *only if* we sow to the Spirit and not to the flesh...which makes *aionios* life *conditional*. Moreover, we, the Christian (to whom the epistles are written), *must take hold of this aionios life*.

Since these verses are saying that *aionios/age-lasting* life is *conditional*, based on the actions of the one with whom it is in view, *and the ones being addressed here are already Christians*, we must conclude that the attaining of *age-lasting* life is subsequent to one becoming a Christian. (Remember, *all Christians already possess life and salvation unto eternity*.) We can also clearly see in Titus 3:7 that those who hope for eternal life are those who have already been “justified by His grace.” Notice that “eternal life” is spoken of as a *hope*, not a certainty. It is the *calling* of the Christian (cf. I Tim. 6:12; Heb. 3:1; Matt 21:43); it is not the *calling regarding how to become a Christian*. Can you see the distinction? What are your thoughts?

I hope that you can see from this sampling of verses that the phrase “eternal [*aionios*] life” almost always has to do with life in the kingdom to come, *life* for a specific amount of time – 1,000 years, rather than it being an exclusive term referencing only *forever and ever life*. This is an extremely important distinction to grasp.

Briefly, let’s view another verse wherein the word “eternal” (*aionios*) is used in relation to *salvation*, rather than life.

Hebrews 5:9

And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal [*aionios*] salvation [Lit., *age-lasting* salvation]...

Keeping in mind what we have covered so far concerning the use of the word *aionios*, what is this verse saying?

This verse is speaking of salvation *in relation to an age*. The recipient of said salvation *would have to obey Him* (Jesus). This is clearly speaking of works, isn’t it? This, then, puts *age-lasting salvation* in the same category as *age-lasting life* – one must *do something* to get it.

Age-lasting salvation and *age-lasting* life are for a period of time, with a beginning and an end. It all has to do with the coming age.

In closing for today, I would like us to see that the New Testament writers did indeed possess a way to express the idea of *forever and ever* (our secular concept of *eternity*), if they so chose. There were a couple of ways that they did so. First is the Greek phrase translated into English as “forever,” which consists of the noun “the ages” (in its plural form with the definite article), preceded by the preposition “unto.” The Greek rendering would be *eis/eios aionas* (1519 + 165), which literally means “unto the ages.”

Matthew 6:13

“And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever [Lit., unto the ages].”

Romans 9:5

...whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever [Lit., unto the ages].

Romans 11:36

For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever [Lit., unto the ages]. Amen.

And second is the English phrase “forever and ever,” which consists of the Greek words *eis/eios* (1519), followed by the word *tous* (5124, used with repeating definite articles), followed by the plural noun *aionas* (165, plural form of the noun *aion* with a definite article). This phrase literally reads, “unto these the ages of the ages.” It is used in the following verses –

Hebrews 13:21b

...through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen

I Peter 4:11

To Him be dominion forever and ever. Amen.

I do hope you now can see that there is a clear distinction in Scripture between the ideas of *age-lasting* and *forever and ever*, and we must be very careful not to confuse them. Unfortunately however, the English translations have made it difficult to discern the differences with their overreaching translation of “eternal” in almost every case where it should be *age-lasting*.

The main focus of Scripture is about the coming Seventh Day. It is the focus of the Word; it is the focus for man; it is the purpose for man.

Tomorrow we’ll be studying a portion of Scripture that will be useful in tying together all that you have learned up to this point. It’ll be a short study day, but packed full of information.

See you then!

Day Five – The Rich Young Ruler

The following Scripture passage shows clearly that the biblical phrase “eternal life” does not *exclusively* mean *forever and ever*. In the following account we will see the synonymous nature between “eternal [*aionios*] life,” “the kingdom of heaven,” and salvation. Let’s study Matthew’s account of the rich, young ruler –

Matthew 19:16-29

16 And behold, one came to Him and said, “Teacher, what good thing shall I do, that I may obtain eternal life?” [Mark’s version uses the phrase, “*inherit* eternal life.”] **17** And He said to him, “Why are you asking me about what is good? There is only One who is good; but if you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments.”

8 He said to Him, “Which ones?” And Jesus said, “You shall not commit murder; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not steal; you shall not bear false witness; **19** honor your father and mother; and you shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

20 The young man said to Him, “All these things I have kept; what am I still lacking?” **21** Jesus said to him, “If you wish to be complete, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.” **22** But when the young man heard this statement, he went away grieved; for he was one who owned much property. **23** And Jesus said to His disciples, “Truly I say to you, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. **24** And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.”

25 And when the disciples heard this, they were very astonished and said, “Then who can be saved?” **26** And looking upon them Jesus said to them, “With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.” **27** Then Peter answered and said to Him “Behold, we have left everything and followed You; what then will there be for us?”

28 And Jesus said to them, “Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

29 And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mothers or children or farms for My name’s sake, shall receive many times as much, and shall inherit eternal life.”

(In Mark 10:30 we read this verse this way: “But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world [Lit., the age] to come eternal [*aionios*] life.”)

Let’s make sure we clearly understand the topic of the interchange between the young man and Jesus. The man has come up to Jesus and has asked a question. What is the question?

This question is the crux of the matter being dealt with. How does Jesus answer him in v. 17b?

Did you see the clear, synonymous nature of the two terms being dealt with in vv. 16 and 17? *Obtaining eternal life* is the same as *entering into life*. And when you add in Mark’s version, we would see that the term *inheriting eternal life* is synonymous as well. (We will be dealing with the idea of an *inheritance* in relation to *aionios* life more thoroughly in Lesson Four.)

What did Jesus tell this young man to keep in order to obtain this life?

This man then tells Jesus that he has indeed kept all of the commandments, yet he knows that he is still lacking something. He asks Jesus what he is lacking. What does Jesus tell him to do (v. 21)?

Not only do we see here that Jesus tells this man to *do something* (in other words, *work* to obtain life/enter into life), but we also see Jesus make another synonymous interchange between the phrases *entering into life* and *being complete*.

An important distinction has just been made here. Jesus has said that this young man *must work* in order to inherit/obtain “eternal life.” We know that a person’s own works have no place with the free gift of salvation by grace through faith – no place at all. The free gift of salvation is based on the work of Jesus Christ, and it is *given freely by grace, through faith*, to those who believe (cf. Acts 16:30; Eph. 2:8-9). If, at this point, one was to view the phrase “eternal life” in the broadest sense of *being saved from hell for eternity*, then there would be a contradiction because Jesus is telling the rich man that *he has to do something* to receive it. And, as we know, contradictions do not exist in God’s Word. Therefore, there must be something more to understand.

Verse 23 gives us the clearest account of what obtaining “eternal” life really has to do with. What does Jesus say in this verse?

Do you see the connection with what we have learned so far in this Lesson? What do you see?

There are two final pieces to put into place. The first can be found in v. 25. What do the disciples ask Jesus after He speaks about the difficulties of *entering the kingdom of heaven*?

Do you remember this verse in Hebrews? Read it again –

Hebrews 5:9

And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal [Lit., age-lasting] salvation.

At this point in your understanding, what do you think the disciples were asking Jesus when they asked, “Then who can be saved?”

The last piece of the picture is seen in v. 28 when Jesus ties it all together by responding to the question asked of Him regarding *the reward* his disciples would receive for having followed Him fully (which is in direct response to what this rich, young ruler chose *not* to do). What does Jesus say in v. 28?

Notice the *timing* Jesus places on the reception of this reward for his followers, a reward that has to do with *rulership*. When would they receive it?

We should now be able to see that “eternal life” (or more aptly, *age-lasting life*), entering into life, being complete, entering the kingdom of heaven/God, being saved and receiving a reward *concerning rulership* can be used *interchangeably*.

Let’s now focus on the last verse, particularly in the way that Mark says it in Mark 10:30. Mark clearly ties it all together with respect to *the age to come* and the receiving of life – “eternal life” – *in that age*. That age is the kingdom which is to come, the Seventh Day.

Having studied this passage, and all of the previous passages we looked at this week that use the phrase “eternal life,” how would you explain “eternal life”? Give details.

I do hope that you now see how important it is to view key terms such as *eternal life* and *eternal salvation* from a *scriptural* standpoint, paying particular attention to the *context* and *content*. It is simply not enough to just rely on man’s translations and definitions.

See you next week.