
Chapter Four

HOW MANY AGES ARE THERE?

If there are different eons (or ages) referred to in Scripture, how many eons (or ages) are there? A detailed study would be a book in itself, and some of the information provided in Scripture is vague and has been interpreted in different ways. Some say there are five eons; others six.

As I do not wish to make this work speculative, I will lay out only those facts concerning the eons that are indisputable. I will not take a stand as to how many eons God has established, but will instead simply show you the individual eons that God clearly makes reference to.

BEFORE THE EONS

The Bible refers to a time “before the eons” began.

- 2 Timothy 1:9-10 “grace which is given to us in Christ Jesus *before times eonian.*”
Titus 1:1-3 God’s promises were made “*before times eonian.*”
1 Corinthians 2:6-8 God’s wisdom designated “*before the eons.*”

THE CURRENT EON

Much more information is revealed concerning the current eon ... the age in which we live.

- Matthew 12:32 “*this eon*”
Matthew 13:22 “the worry of *this eon*”
Mark 4:19 “the worries of *this eon*”
Luke 16:8 “the sons of *this eon*”
Luke 20:34 “The sons of *this eon*”
Romans 12:2 “not to be configured to *this eon*”
1 Corinthians 1:20 “*this eon*”
1 Corinthians 2:6-8 “a wisdom not of *this eon*”
1 Corinthians 3:18 “If anyone among you is presuming to be wise in *this eon*”
2 Corinthians 4:4 “the god of *this eon*”
Galations 1:3-5 “*the present wicked eon*”
1 Timothy 6:17 “Those who are rich in *the current eon*”
2 Timothy 4:9-10 “Demas, loving *the current eon*, forsook me”
Titus 2:11-13 “we should be living sanely and justly and devoutly in *the current eon*”

Two passages which make reference to the current eon are worthy of special attention.

Ephesians 2:2 “in accord with *the eon of this world*”

In some cases our modern English translations have used the word “world” for eon, but here we see that a clearly different idea is intended, since both “aion” and “kosmos” are used in the same sentence (“eon” and “world”). The KJV translates this passage “according to the *course* of this *world*.”

Ephesians 1:21 “not only in *this eon*, but also in that which is impending”

This single passage makes reference to two different eons, making it very clear that there is “*this eon*” (in which we live) and there will be a forthcoming eon; “*that which is impending*.”

THE IMPENDING EON

When this current eon has concluded there will be another eon forthcoming.

Matthew 12:32 “neither in this eon nor in that which is *impending*”
Mark 10:30 Those following Jesus to receive, “in the *coming eon*, life eonian”
Luke 18:30 Those following Jesus to receive, “in the *coming eon*, life eonian”
Luke 20:35 “*that eon*” is compared with “this eon”
Ephesians 1:21 “not only in this eon, but also in *that which is impending*”
Hebrews 6:5 “of the *impending eon*”

AT LEAST TWO EONS TO COME

Jude 1:25 uses the phrase “*for all the eons*.” We have looked at passages that referenced a time before the eons began, but as to the “eons” we read about in Scripture, how many are there? Thus far we have read about:

1. This current eon
2. An eon to come

But Ephesians 2:7 speaks of “*the oncoming eons*” (plural), indicating that in the future there will be at least two eons to come. Therefore we see thus far in God’s Word three separate eons:

1. This current eon
2. An eon to come
3. Another eon to come after that

As to these “oncoming eons,” they are referred to in a number of ways.

THE EON OF THE EONS

Ephesians 3:21 uses the phrase “the eon of the eons,” which seems to make reference to a single eon as compared with the other eons.

Hebrews 1:8 uses a similar phrase, “the eon of the eon,” which seems to make reference to a single eon which proceeds out of (or follows) the previous eon.

THE EONS OF THE EONS

This frequently used phrase makes reference to at least two eons as compared with all of the other eons. It appears to make reference to the last two eons:

- One eon which begins when Christ returns to reign upon the earth for 1000 years (the “millennial kingdom”).
- The eon which follows, when the new heavens and earth are created, and with Christ still reigning.

You can study the various occurrences of the phrase “eons of the eons” in the following passages:

Romans 16:27; Galations 1:5; Philippians 4:20; 1 Timothy 1:17; 2 Timothy 4:18; Hebrews 13:21; 1 Peter 4:11; 1 Peter 5:11; Revelation 1:6,18; Revelation 4:9,10; Revelation 5:13; Revelation 7:12; Revelation 10:6; Revelation 11:15; Revelation 14:11; Revelation 15:7; Revelation 19:3; Revelation 20:10; Revelation 22:5

“FOR THE EON” AND “EONIAN”

An “eon” is a distinct period of time. When the expression “for the eon” is used, it refers to something that is happening during a specific eon. Likewise the expression “for the eons” or “for all the eons” refers to something that is happening during multiple eons, or even during all of the eons.

“Eonian” is the adjective form of “eon,” and is used in a variety of ways in Scripture:

Eonian times
Eonian life
Eonian salvation
Eonian redemption
Eonian covenant
Eonian allotment
Eonian kingdom
Eonian evangel
Eonian consolation
Eonian glory
Eonian God
Eonian fire/punishment

These phrases speak of things that may last for a single eon, for multiple eons, or for all of the eons. Each passage must be studied to determine which is the case. (Note: The Keyword Concordance which is included in the CLNT will enable the reader to study each reference containing the word “eon” or “eonian.”)

But once the eons have ended this does not mean that these things that are “eonian” must end. The phrase “eonian God,” for example, speaks of God as He works in the eons. When the eons

conclude, this does not mean that God ceases to exist, as we see in 1 Corinthians 15 when God becomes “All in all” after the eons have ended.

In other cases, though, things that exist in the eons may end when the eons have concluded. The “eonian kingdom,” for example, ends at the consummation of the eons (1 Corinthians 15) when Christ delivers up the kingdom to God, and when there is no longer a need for “sovereignty, authority, or power.” God concludes the ages by becoming All in all.

Likewise, at the consummation when the final enemy (death) is abolished and when God becomes All in all, fulfilling His ultimate purpose, there will no longer be a need for the fire and punishment that had existed during the eons, for they will have fulfilled their purpose.

THE CONCLUSION (END) OF THE EON

Jesus uses the phrase “conclusion of the eon” several times. Note that “eon” is singular, and Jesus is referring to the end of a particular eon, before the next eon begins.

Matthew 13:39	“the harvest is the <i>conclusion of the eon.</i> ”
Matthew 13:49	“Thus shall it be in the <i>conclusion of the eon.</i> ”
Matthew 24:3	“what is the sign of Thy presence and of the <i>conclusion of the eon.</i> ”
Matthew 28:20	“till the <i>conclusion of the eon.</i> ”

So again we see that an eon is a period of time that has an ending.

THE CONCLUSION (END) OF THE EONS

Another phrase is used in Scripture; “the conclusion of the eons” (plural) which refers to the end of all eons, or ages.

Hebrews 9:26 speaks of Christ’s sacrifice, and notes that “at the conclusion of the eons” He is manifest for the repudiation of sin through His sacrifice. While His sacrifice has taken place long ago, and while many in this present age have been reconciled through His work upon the cross, at the end of the eons He will be manifest that the fullness of His work will be accomplished.

The ultimate passage which speaks of the end of the eons is 1 Corinthians 15:20-28.

“Yet now Christ has been roused from among the dead,
the Firstfruit of those who are reposing.

“For since, in fact, through a man came death,
through a Man, also, comes the resurrection of the dead.

“For even as, in Adam, all are dying,
thus also, in Christ, shall all be vivified.

“Yet each in his own class:
the Firstfruit, Christ;
thereupon those who are Christ’s in His presence;

thereafter **the consummation**,

“whenever He may be giving up the kingdom to His God and Father,

“whenever He should be nullifying all sovereignty and all authority and power.
For He must be reigning until He should be placing all His enemies
under His feet.

“The last enemy is being abolished: death.

“For He subjects all under His feet ...

“then the Son Himself also shall be subjected to Him ...
that God may be All in all.”

THE PURPOSE OF THE EONS

Ephesians 1:11 points out that God “is operating all in accord with the counsel of His will.” Similarly in Ephesians 3:9-11 we find that the eons have a purpose. Here Paul writes that he has been granted grace,

“to bring the evangel
of the untraceable riches of Christ to the nations,

“and to enlighten all
as to what is the administration of the secret,

“which has been concealed from the eons in God,
Who creates all,

“that now may be made known
to the sovereignties and the authorities among the celestials,
through the ecclesia,

“the multifarious wisdom of God,
in accord with the purpose of the eons
which He makes in Christ Jesus, our Lord ...”

Since there was a time before the eons existed, and a time after the eons end, why did God bring into existence this period of time referred to as “the eons?” We see here that the eons have a purpose. And since God is operating all in accord with the counsel of His will, we understand that He is using “the eons” to accomplish His purposes; ultimately leading all things toward “the consummation” at the end of the eons, when God becomes All in all. (1 Corinthians 15:28)

Romans 11:36 tells us that all is “out of God.” 1 Corinthians 15:28 tells us that God will ultimately be “All in all.” The eons are the period of time between, which God uses to accomplish His will and His purposes.

WHAT IS THE POINT?

While I have not attempted to show how many specific eons are mentioned in Scripture, I have desired to show that **there are distinct, separate eons (or ages) that are mentioned in God's Word.** These "eons" are periods of time with a beginning and an end.

There was a time before these eons began. There will be a time when all of the eons will come to an end. We have seen at least three distinct eons referred to in God's Word.

These distinctions are lost in most modern English translations since there is no consistency in translation, and it is impossible to see the various eons that God speaks of. Our goal in this chapter has been to reveal these distinctions, so that we can see God systematically working to accomplish His purposes and His will through the eons, or ages.