

# Bereans Bible Institute, Module IV

## Lesson 8 – The Perspective of TIME in Scripture

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I. Jewish World View – spatial & temporal – stemmed from a humble view of man.

A. Spatially: Everything is presented from man’s observable perspective on land.

1. The surface of the “land” is man’s habitat.
2. The “heaven” is the sky above, most of which is outside of man’s observable reach.
3. The seas are “beneath the earth” and man cannot perceive its depths.
4. Man views everything spatially from his “surface dwelling” perspective.

B. Temporally: “Time” has the same kinds of limitations and perspective.

1. Man’s viewpoint and perspective is the present.
2. He views his passing days as travelling along a path on a journey.
  - a. Psalm 119:105 *“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”*
  - b. Prov. 3:6 *“In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will direct your path.”*
  - c. Matt. 7:14 *“Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.”*
  - d. Eph. 4:17-19 *“This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, 18 having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart”*
3. He can see only a little ways ahead, just over the next hill. When he reaches that vantage point, he will see only to the next hill.
4. Google Maps – Street View (as opposed to satellite view)

C. The SAME Jewish perspective is used by the Jewish writers of the New Testament.

1. The Jewish (finite) world-view using the Greek language, using finite terminology.
  - a. Example: Rev. 1:8 *“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, says the Lord, ‘who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.’”*

D. This perspective solves many apparent contradictions.

II. Greek (Pagan) World View – spatial & temporal – stemmed from an exalted view of man

A. Derived from paganism (demons) and human speculation (philosophy)

B. Spatially: They Imagined that stars were living beings; that many gods exist in the heavens; that men can become gods; that certain kings and emperors were “gods”; that the “immortal souls” of all men have always existed and have been forced to descend from the heavens to be imprisoned in flesh bodies.

1. Believing that they were “immortal souls” who had descended from heaven, they imagined earth as viewed from heaven.

C. Temporally: They also imagined “time” from an external observation point as though they could see and perceive eternity past and eternity future, since their “souls” were also eternal.

D. Google Maps Satellite View (as opposed to street view)

E. This desired perspective was Satan’s downfall, and the lie to Eve (“You will be as gods”).

### III. There is no single word in the Hebrew Bible that means “infinite” time.

A. “OLAM” is the Hebrew word that defines “time” beyond what is observable (both past & future).

1. “Olam” (#5769), literally means “concealed.”

a. From the verb “alam,” meaning to cover or hide from view.

b. Strong’s definition: “*vanishing point; generally time out of mind.*”

c. Time beyond the horizon, out of sight (beyond Google Street View)

2. Examples: Genesis 3:22; Exodus 12:14; Deut. 15:17; Deut. 23:3,6

3. “Olam” is incorrectly translated “forever” (as an adverb) and “everlasting/eternal” as an adjective.

a. “Forever” or “eternal” is conveyed by saying “without end” (Isaiah 9:6-7).

4. Translating “olam” as “forever” (adverb) or “everlasting” (adjective) creates many internal contradictions in Scripture:

a. cf. Ex. 40:13-15; Lev. 7:34-36; Num. 25:10-13 vs. Heb. 7:11-19; Heb. 9:6-10

B. “AD OLAM” (#5704+#5769) “as long as” + “concealed”

1. “ad” means “until,” “without interruption” (continuous state or action)

2. “ad olam” means “continuously until time concealed,” adding the concept of an uninterrupted state until time out of sight.

3. Examples: Gen. 13:15; Ex. 14:13; Deut. 12:28; Deut. 28:45-47; Josh. 14:9; 1 Sam. 1:22

### IV. Rendering “olam” into Greek in the Septuagint (250 BC)

A. There is no exact equivalent in Greek for “olam” (time out of sight).

B. The LXX translators chose to render “olam” (adverb) as “*unto the age*” (εις τον αιωνα).

1. An “age” in Greek is a finite period of time, its length being determined by context.

a. Deut. 15:17 LXX “... and he will be your servant unto the age (εις τον αιωνα).”

2. The superlative<sup>1</sup> Hebrew form of “olam” is “olam, olam” (lit. “concealed, concealed” or “time out of sight, out of sight”). Rather than translating this verbatim as “*unto the age, age,*” the LXX translators used the plural “*unto the ages*” (εις τους αιωνας). This does not mean there are necessarily multiple defined “ages” beyond the limit of sight, but just like the Hebrew, it places a stronger emphasis on just how concealed from view the time is. The Greek expression “*unto the ages*” (plural) is an idiom,<sup>2</sup> and simply means BEYOND merely just over the horizon, but farther still (perhaps over 2 hills), those doubly concealed. For the Jewish mind, this would mean that once you reach the point that is now out of sight beyond the horizon, this time would still be over the next horizon. How much farther is completely undefined.

a. Examples: 1 Kings 8:13 LXX; Psalm 61:4,8 LXX

3. A new super-superlative expression appears in a few places: “ad olam (singular), ad olam (plural) olam (plural).” The LXX renders this expression as “*unto the ages of the ages*” (εις τους αιωνας των αιωνων).

a. The Hebrew language sometimes uses the plural of a word as a superlative. “Elohim” (plural) means “God” but implies the highest God, or the God of the greatest Godness.

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<sup>1</sup> A *superlative* is a form of an adjective or adverb that expresses the concept of *surpassing all others* with regard to the quality or quantity that the adjective or adverb portrays. In English, a superlative of “quick” would be “quicker,” or “quickest.” Hence, making “olam” (time out of sight) a superlative, you might say “*until time out of sight surpassing others.*”

<sup>2</sup> Idioms are expressions that everyone understands, but no one takes literally. Common examples are: “fall ill; change your mind; clear the air; crack down; about face; drop the ball; fed up; hang out; in the dark; on the ball;” etc..

b. Thus, the expression above literally translates: “*until time concealed, until time utterly concealed, utterly concealed.*” In other words, when you reach the time concealed over the horizon, and the next horizon, the time indicated will be over another horizon, still out of sight. It is extremely concealed.

c. The LXX translators did essentially with the Greek language what Daniel did with the Hebrew (Aramaic) language where this clause appears – repeating the terms to express the extreme, and using the plural form. Dan. 7:18 LXX “*And the saints of the Most High shall take the Kingdom, and they shall hold it until the age, and unto the ages of ages*” (εως αιωνος και εως αιωνος των αιωνων). See also Psalm 84:4 LXX.

4. This most extreme super-superlative term “*unto the ages of ages*” is used of finite periods of time. Psalm 119:44 KJV “*So shall I keep thy law continually for ever and ever*” (olam u-ad) lit: “*time concealed and beyond.*” The LXX renders this as “*I will keep your Law unto the age, unto the ages of ages.*” In the context throughout Psalm 119, David was speaking of the Law of Moses, which has become obsolete with the coming of the New Covenant. Also, by using “ad” which means uninterrupted, it is clear that David was speaking only about his lifetime (not the resurrection), beyond what he could foresee and even beyond that. This was how determined he was to obey the Law that God had given to Israel. The clause, “*unto the ages of the ages*” did not imply infinity, but was still limited to David’s own lifetime.

C. The LXX translators chose to render “olam” (adjective) as “αιωνιος” (age-lasting), the adjectival form of “αιων” (age).

1. Examples from the Levitical Priesthood: Ex. 27:21; Ex. 28:43; Ex. 29:28; Lev. 7:35-36

2. Other examples: Job. 10:21-22; Job 41:4; Psalm 77:7; Prov. 22:28; Prov. 23:10; Isa. 54:4

V. The New Testament writers who were Jewish, and all familiar with the use of “olam” in the Hebrew Old Testament. They were also well versed in the Greek Old Testament, and quoted from it often. In writing the New Testament, they simply borrowed the superlative expressions from the Septuagint, which were well known and understood as idioms.

A. David’s expression that he would keep God’s Law “*unto the age, even the ages of ages,*” (which is confined to his own lifetime), is exactly the same expression concerning the tormenting of Satan, the Beast, and the False Prophet in the “Lake of Fire” in Rev. 20:10.

B. All of the terms in the English Bible which mean **infinite, unending time**, including the adverb forms “forever, forever and ever,” as well as the adjectival forms “eternal” and “everlasting,” are simply superlative idioms in Greek borrowed from the Hebrew “olam” (time concealed, or beyond the horizon). None of these terms ever mean infinite time, or unending time. That concept is expressed by simply saying “unending,” as in Luke 1:33 (ουκ εσται τελος – shall not end).

VI. Illogical Implications

A. If “olam” (Heb.) means “forever,” what does “olam, olam” mean?

B. If “unto the age” (Grk.) means “forever,” is “*unto the ages of the ages*” beyond infinity?

VII. The source of the confusion is imposing the Greek (pagan) perspective onto the Scriptures. When the translators believe that they are immortal, eternal souls (ghosts), they must extend the terminology of Scripture to accommodate their eternal existence, thus corrupting the Scriptures.