



[Ephesians 2:2](#)

(2) in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience,
New King James Version

In [Ephesians 2:2](#), Paul writes of "the course of this world." The Greek word *kosmos*, translated into the English word "world," essentially means an "orderly system." To human eyes beholding all the activity throughout the earth, [the world](#) looks anything but orderly. It looks confusing, to say the least. However, that conclusion depends on one's perspective.

What is going on to discerning eyes, the eyes of one to whom [God](#) has revealed Himself, is an orderly system of *deception* cloaked by restless activity among humans involved in constant wars, thousands of religions, evil conduct, corrupting entertainments, and other distracting, time-wasting business and social vanities. All of this restless activity is in reality nothing but a smokescreen hiding a sinister influence from discovery.

Notice something to which we generally do not pay much attention. The word "world" appears as the object of the preposition "of." This prepositional phrase modifies "course," showing us that Paul is speaking of a specific "course" available to us to choose from among others. The Greek word translated "course," *aion*, is especially interesting. At first, it indicates "an age," "an indefinite period of time," and by extension, "perpetuity."

However, *Vine's Dictionary of New Testament Words* provides an interesting alternative, saying that it also means, "Time viewed in *relation* to what takes place during that period" (emphasis added). *Aion*, then, does not have to mean simply "time" in some form: Vine shows that it is correctly translated "place" in [Hebrews 5:6](#). Other commentators go into greater detail, but we will quote only two highly respected ones that other commentators frequently cite as authorities.

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First, Richard C. Trench is a resource virtually every commentator eventually quotes on the definitions of biblical words. He defines *aion* as:

. . . all that floating mass of thought, opinions, maxims, speculations, hopes, impulses, aims and aspirations at any time current in the world, which is impossible to seize and accurately define, but which constitutes a most real and effective power, being our moral or immoral atmosphere which at every moment of our lives we inhale, again inevitably exhale.

Aion, translated as "course" in [Ephesians 2:2](#), is the vague, ever-present immaterial realm that we are surrounded by and live in. It is interesting that Trench ties his definition to air, in that, even as we unconsciously breathe air in and out to sustain life, the course of the world is every bit as necessary to carnal life and is affecting us invisibly and constantly.

Second, Johann A. Bengel adds that *aion* is ". . . the subtle informing spirit of the Kosmos, or world of men who are living alienated and apart from God." This is what Germans termed *zeitgeist*, the spirit of the age—the "informing spirit"! The term "spirit" is used to indicate the invisible, immaterial influence whose characteristics are absorbed and then manifested in the attitudes and conduct of the general population of a given people.

An American commentator, Kenneth Wuest, is very helpful at this juncture:

To distinguish between *aion* and *kosmos*, *kosmos* gives the over-all picture of mankind alienated from God during all of history, and *aion* represents any distinct age or period of human history as marked out from another by particular characteristics.

Course in *Roget's International Thesaurus*, under the heading "tendency," has such synonyms as "thoughts," "zeitgeist," "spirit," "disposition," "character," "nature," "makeup," "bent," "slant," "frame of mind," "attitude," "inclination," "mind-set," "drift," "perspective," and many more. It may be easier to understand "course of this world" by rephrasing it into statements such as, "according to the disposition of this world"; "according to the character of this world"; "according to the nature of this world"; "according to the makeup of this world"; "according to the mindset, drift, or perspective of this world."

This is the spirit from which we must be converted. It is the unseen foundation and fountain of our pre-[conversion](#) conduct, and it is the same spirit still motivating us when

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we act carnally or in the flesh. Despite conversion, it remains within us, compressed like
a spring that is ready to jump into action and influence our conduct.

— John W. Ritenbaugh

To learn more, see:

[Communication and Leaving Babylon \(Part One\)](#)

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