

What Does Aion Mean?

While it is relatively straightforward to prove, as we did in the last chapter, that aion does not mean eternity, it is entirely another matter to show you in the same manner what aion does mean.

To prove aion does not mean eternity, we only had to use a small number of verses. But to show you the full range of what aion means, we would have to examine and analyze all the occurrences of the word in the New Testament.¹ Aion is found in 102 verses in the New Testament, and its adjective aionios is found in 69 verses. So this task is well beyond the scope of this book, and is not necessary to achieve our purpose.

So to keep it short, in this chapter, I will be giving you my opinion, and the opinions of others. I know many of you want an answer to the question of what aion does mean, so this chapter is here to satisfy that curiosity, not because it is important for the theme of this book.

Aion basically means an age: an indefinite or unknown period of time. It can be longer, or shorter, depending on what it is applied to. It could be a generation, a person's lifetime, or it could be an entire age, like the church age.

For instance, if it is applied to a human, it will be longer than if it is applied to a dog, since the normal human life-span is longer than that of a dog. If it is applied to God, then it would be reasonable to think of it as eternal, not because the word itself means eternal, which we have proven it cannot, but because God Himself is eternal. But when aion is used with other objects, such as man, or the fire that burned up Sodom, or the time Jonah was in the belly of the great fish, it has a different duration.

I can refer to a tall dog, a tall man, and a tall mountain. But the word "tall" has to be understood in the context of what it is describing. So when aionian is used in reference to God, it can mean a longer time period, than when aionian is used in reference to something else.

From this basic meaning of "an age," a meaning developed for the adjective aionios, which could be described as something that "pertained to an age" or that was "distinctive to an age."

Messianic Life

So when the writers of the New Testament spoke of believers having "aionion life" now as a present tense possession (1 John 3:15 for example), they meant the kind of life which will be distinctive when Jesus rules on earth. Another way of saying it would be "Messianic life" or even "Divine life." It does not refer to the duration of the life, but to the quality or kind of life.

Many Christians today believe there will be a future literal, physical reign of Jesus Christ on earth lasting 1,000 years. They refer to this time as The Millennium. If someone today were to speak of "millennium life," these believers would not think it meant literally living 1,000 years.

¹ All these verses are listed online at www.WrongAboutHell.com.

Instead they would think it meant "pertaining to life in the millennium" or "life as it will be in the millennium."

Probably this is similar to what the term "aionion life" meant to the people Jesus was speaking to in His earthly ministry. They expected a future age where the Messiah would set up His kingdom and rule on earth. They considered that the aion to come, just as we today think of The Millennium as the age to come. So "aionion life" probably caused them to think of the life belonging to another age, a future, perfect time.

The Translator's New Testament is a version specifically for those who translate the Bible into new languages. It contains a note which says, "In the New Testament eternal life is that kind of life which is given to all true believers in Christ. The word `eternal' draws attention to the quality of that life, not to its duration in a temporal sense. Thus eternal life can be experienced by believers even while subject to the temporal conditions of earthly life. Translators should be careful to avoid expressions which mean no more than a timeless continuation of life after death."

Most scriptures refer to "eternal life" as a present possession instead of a future possession. For example:

1 JOHN 3:14-15 KJV

14 We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.

15 Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.

From this passage, we see that eternal life is a present-tense possession which affects the nature of a person. So it is clearly not talking about how long the life lasts, but how it changes us. This meaning was a natural outgrowth of thinking about the kind of life people would enjoy under the reign of the Messiah in the age to come: aeonian life, or we could say Messianic life. The idea was that this life will be the kind of life enjoyed in the perfect age when the Messiah ruled.

So aionion life, or as it is normally translated in our English Bibles, eternal life, is the life that the One has who will rule in the coming aions, that is God. So aionion life can be said to mean the kind of life God has, which is the life of the age to come.

The Bible clearly says those who believe in Jesus Christ have this life inside them right now. And it will continue to be the possession of believers in the age to come without any interruption.

JOHN 5:24 KJV

24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.

JOHN 6:47 KJV

47 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.

When we read these verses we need to think of having God's kind of life in us, and enjoying perfect life, instead of thinking they mean that we will live forever. Note that the three verses above clearly refer to "aionion life" as the present possession of believers who will all at some point still die physically. So these words, translated in our English Bibles as "eternal life" could not possibly mean living forever.