

# Hell – Aionios (αἰώνιος)

"Writing in The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology under the subject heading of time, Joachim Guhrt stated that aion is "primarily a designation for a long period of time [either ending or unending—EL/KB].... Eternity is thus not necessarily a timeless concept, but the most comprehensive temporal one which the experience of time has produced" (1978, p. 826). Although Guhrt admitted that when aionios is used in the gospel of John (to form "eternal life"), it can be used in a qualitative sense, nevertheless "there is also a temporal sense, so that eternal (aionios) indicates the quantity of this life" (p. 832; see also Robertson, 1932, 5:49-50)."

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"Finally, James Orr wrote in the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia that the reply...that aionios...denotes quality, not duration, cannot be sustained. Whatever else the term includes, it connotes duration.... [I]t can hardly be questioned that "the aeons of the aeons" and similar phrases are the practical New Testament equivalents for eternity, and that aionios in its application to God and to life ("eternal life") includes the idea of unending duration.... When, therefore, the term is applied in the same context to punishment and to life (Matt. 25:46), and no hint is given anywhere of limitation, the only reasonable exegesis is to take the word in its full sense of "eternal" (1956, 4:2502)."

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"The first definition Hermann Sasse provided for aion in the highly regarded Theological Dictionary of the New Testament is "in the sense of prolonged time or eternity" (1964, 1:198). Later, when discussing aionios "as a term for the object eschatological expectation," he indicated that it likewise is used to mean "unceasing" or "endless," while sometimes extending beyond the purely temporal meaning (1:209; see also Carson, 1996, p. 523)."

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"According to A.T. Robertson: "The word aionios...means either without beginning or without end or both. It comes as near to the idea of eternal as the Greek can put it in one word" (1930, 1:202, emp. added)"

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"According to Thayer, aion is used in the New Testament numerous times simply to mean "forever" (1962, p. 19). He then defined aionios in the following three ways: (1) "without beginning or end, that which always has been and always will be;" (2) "without beginning;" and (3) "without end, never to cease, everlasting" (p. 20)."

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"Of aionios (the Greek word used twice in Matthew 25:46 to describe both "punishment" and "life"), W.E. Vine wrote: "describes duration, either undefined but not endless, as in Rom. 16:25; 2 Tim. 1:9; Tit. 1:2; or undefined because endless as in Rom. 16:26 and the other sixty-six places in the N.T." (1940, 2:43)."

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"Of the word aionios, R.C.H. Lenski asked, "[I]f this Greek adjective does not mean 'eternal,' which Greek adjective does have that meaning? Or did the Greek world, including the Jewish (Jesus spoke Aramaic) world, have no words for eternity or eternal?" (1943, p. 997)."

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"The first two definitions of the word *aion* provided by Danker, Arndt, and Gingrich are as follows: (1) "a long period of time, without ref. to beginning or end" and (2) "a segment of time as a particular unit of history, age." Three definitions are then provided for *aionios*: (1) "pert. to a long period of time, long ago;" (2) "pert. to a period of time without beginning or end, eternal of God;" and (3) "pert. to a period of unending duration, without end" (Danker, et al., 2000, pp. 32-33, italics in orig.)."

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"The word *aionios* is used seventy times throughout the New Testament. Three times it is used to describe God's eternal nature (Romans 16:26; 1 Timothy 6:16; Hebrews 9:14). It is found over forty times in the New Testament, in reference to the unending happiness of the righteous (e.g., John 10:28; Romans 5:21; 6:23; 1 John 1:2). And five times it is used in reference to the punishment of the wicked (cf. 2 Thessalonians 1:9; Jude 7). In Matthew 25:46, the word appears twice—once in reference to "eternal punishment," and once in reference to "eternal life." Simply put, if the punishment mentioned in this verse is temporary, then so is heaven. Contextually, the two are linked. Just as Jesus expected His disciples to understand heaven as a place of permanent, unending happiness for conscious souls of people, He likewise intended for them to understand hell as a place of permanent, unending torment for conscious souls. The fact that Christ made a special point of repeating *aionios* in the same sentence requires that we stay with the plain meaning of the word. Both heaven and hell will be eternal (unending!) in duration."

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"Moses Stuart concluded in his book, *Exegetical Essays on Several Words Relating to Future Punishment*:

[I]f the Scriptures have not asserted the endless punishment of the wicked, neither have they asserted the endless happiness of the righteous, nor the endless glory and existence of the Godhead. The one is equally certain with the other. Both are laid in the same balance. They must be tried by the same tests. And if we give up the one, we must, in order to be consistent, give up the other also (1830, p. 57)."

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