

THE UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;
but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,
**I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God
IN CHRIST JESUS.***

(Philippians 3:13-14 NASB)

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Immortal Life and Eonian Life

November 23, 2009

Periodically, I refer to **immortal life (immortality)** and **eonian life** as two kinds of life, and I seldom, if ever, refer to **eternal life**, for good reason. This issue provides a broad overview of these terms. For more detailed explanation, I refer you to my book *The Purpose and Plan of the Eons*, in particular, Volume 1, Chapter 1, and Volume 2, Chapters 2 and 3. For a quick read on the words *eon* and *eternal*, please see issue #03-09131, June 15, 2009, *Eon (Age), Not Eternal or World*.

The challenge or problem, whichever way one sees it, begins with the word *eternal*. The fact of the matter is that if the word *eternal* (or its counterpart, *everlasting*) were dropped entirely from the many translations that use it, in one case 75 times, it would dramatically alter or destroy the egregious tradition of men that places all the emphasis of the gospel on eternal life and relegates resurrection and immortality to the back burner, so to speak, if emphasized at all, and that has no understanding whatsoever of a life (i.e., eonian life) in the coming eon or age of the kingdom of Christ.

The source of the challenge begins with the translation and understanding of the transliterated Greek words *aiōn* (noun) and *aiōnion* (adjective), which appear in the Greek text a combined total of nearly 200 times and which are translated using upwards of 40 English words or expressions. The English equivalent or Anglicized word for *aiōn* is *eon* and for *aiōnion* is *eonian*. As you will note, I prefer to use the words *eon* and *eonian* in my writings, and use them in the sense that the Greeks would have used them, that is, as referring to a long, indefinite segment or period of time with a beginning and an end. This defines an age or an eon. In other words, an eon is not endless, even if it extends for a very long period of time. Thus, eonian life refers to life in an eon or age and does not refer to life in eternity (i.e., outside of time).

So, let us look at the two terms *immortal life* and *eonian life*.

First, **immortal life** is quite straightforward. The Greek word *athanasia* is translated as *immortal*, which means “deathlessness” or “beyond death” (1 Corinthians 15:53, 54; 1 Timothy 6:16). It is life that is beyond death, never to be subjected to the possibility of death. This should be the hope and expectation of all believers. However, I would be remiss if I did not add that it also is the ultimate destiny of all mankind when, at the consummation of the eons, God the Father is all in all.

Contrary to the tradition of men, immortality does not come about when one dies, that is, through death of the mortal body: It comes about with the redemption of our body that occurs with resurrection; a future event for which Christians should be waiting eagerly (Romans 8:23). No one has immortality at this point in time, for, according to Paul, **the King of kings and the Lord of lords alone possesses immortality** [athanasia] (1 Timothy 6:15-16).

The **redemption of the body** comes with the placing or **adoption as sons** (Romans 8:23) when this mortal puts on immortality (1 Corinthians 15:53). It is when we put on our dwelling from heaven so that what is mortal is swallowed up by life (2 Corinthians 5:1-5). It is when we are glorified into the image of the Son of God.

However, even among believers, all will not put on immortality **at the same time**. Some will put it on at the first resurrection that commences the Lord’s Day, and others will put it on at the second resurrection that commences God’s Day. The firstfruits anointed of Christ (1 Corinthians 15:23) will be the first to come into immortality as they are raised from among the dead in the **first resurrection** (Revelation 20:5-6) or the **out-resurrection** (Philippians 3.11), also referred to by Paul as the **better resurrection** (Hebrews 11:35). The rest of the believers will follow 1,000 years later, brought forth from death in the second resurrection to appear before the **Great White Throne**, where they **will be saved, yet so as through fire** (1 Corinthians 3:15).

Another reference to immortal life is found in Paul's explanation of Melchizedek. In the Greek, the word *akatalutos* is properly used to express immortality, and Paul uses it to contrast the Levitical priesthood with the Melchizedek priesthood. The Levites were placed as priests based on a law of physical requirement, that is, based on their genealogy or bloodline that was traced to Levi. These priests died and had to be replaced with other mortals of the same genetic line. But God's Son is a high priest of an entirely different order based on the law of life.

(15) And this is clearer still, if another priest arises according to the likeness of Melchizedek, (16) who has become such not on the basis of a law of physical requirement, but according to the power of an indestructible [akatalutos] life. (17) For it is attested of Him, "YOU ARE A PRIEST FOREVER ACCORDING TO THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK." (Hebrews 7:15-17 NASB)

Some translations use the word *endless* in place of *indestructible*, but the meaning is the same, for it means that death has no power over such a life. Death is what destroys (brings destruction to) life, but **the power of the indestructible life** ensures that death has no more power over such a life. God declared that His Son is of this new order, but there are to be more king-priests to follow of the same order. They are the conquerors who will reign with Christ for 1,000 years, but to do so, they too must possess an indestructible life that comes about when this mortal will have put on immortality. Again, this only comes through the first resurrection if one is to reign with Christ. There is no other way.

Second, technically speaking, **eonian life** is not the same as immortal life. Immortal life is not dependent on the eons, or time, and space, and as such, is the proper term for eternal life. Eonian life is dependent on the eons, for it speaks of life in time and, more specifically, life in the coming eon or Kingdom Age on earth, and participating in and enjoying life in this eon. Jesus Himself linked eonian life to the coming eon. Notice that the CV has chosen to use the expression *life eonian*, which is the same as *eonian life*.

Who may not by all means be getting back manyfold in this era, and in the coming eon, life eonian. (Luke 18.30 CV; also see Mark 10:30)

Third, in spite of their difference, eonian life and immortal life are *sometimes* synonymous with each other. In studying Scripture, we need to keep in mind that eonian life by itself does not tell us if it also refers to immortal life or, if you prefer, eternal life. For this, we need to understand the context.

Fourth, all the conquering saints who participate in the first resurrection and transfiguration will not only put on immortality but also will have eonian life, since they will be alive to enjoy the Kingdom Age as they rule and reign with Christ on the earth.

Fifth, however, eonian life is not restricted to those who will put on immortality as the next eon commences. Simply, all who are immortal in the next eon will have eonian life in the next eon, but others also will have eonian life in the next eon but not immortal life in the next eon. In the oncoming eon, mortals (typified by nations) will continue to live on earth; some will enjoy it by receiving an inheritance (i.e., a part) in the kingdom, others will not. When the Son of Mankind comes in His glory, seated upon His throne of glory, He will divide the sheep nations from the goat (kid) nations.

"And these [kid nations] shall be coming away into chastening eonian, yet the just [sheep nations] into life eonian." (Matthew 25.46 CV)

The King of Glory will reward the sheep nations with life eonian, meaning they will **"enjoy the allotment [inheritance] of the kingdom"** (Matthew 25:34 CV). *Chastening eonian* does not mean that the kid nations will be tormented in man's hell or annihilated altogether. They will be ruled over with a rod or club of iron to teach them righteousness (Isaiah 26:9) with the ultimate goal of restoring them, which is the purpose of **fire eonian** (Matthew 25:41 CV), which is the divine law of God (the words of the Lord). After all, the Lord declares: **"Is not My word like fire?"** (Jeremiah 23:29).

There is much more that could be offered to prove the point, but I must leave it with this and encourage you that when you see the term "eternal life" in Scripture, replace it with "eonian life," and reread it in context with the concept of the eons (not eternity) in view. May the spirit of truth be with you!