

EVERLASTING HABITATIONS

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In Luke chapter 16, Jesus Christ taught his disciples to be faithful, beginning with the parable of the unrighteous steward. He warned those who would follow in the footsteps of the unfaithful man in the parable to “make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into *everlasting habitations*” (Luke 16:9). Here, the term “everlasting habitations” specifically refers to the dwelling place of the wicked in the next life. The word “everlasting” is the Greek word *aiionios*, which means “perpetual,” and is used a total of 70 times in the New Testament. It comes from the Greek word *aion*, meaning “an age,” which is where our English word “eon” comes from. Christ used the very same word in Luke 18:8 in reference to the reward in the next life for the righteous, “life everlasting.” This is the common word used for the duration of the “habitations” for both the righteous and wicked in the life to come. In fact, the same word is used in Hebrews 6:2 when we are told that the doctrine of “eternal judgment” is one of the foundation principles of the doctrine of Christ. Therefore, it is worthwhile to study and consider the meaning of this word and the importance of it in terms of how it should impact the choices we make in this life.

Everlasting life

Here are the New Testament references in which *aiionios* is used to define the duration of the reward for the righteousness in the next life: Matthew 18:8; 19:6,29; 25:46; Mark 10:17,30; Luke 10:25; 18:18,30; John 3:15,16,36; 4:14,36; 5:24,39; 6:27,40,47,54,68; 10:28; 12:25,50; 17:2,3; Acts 13:46,48; Romans 2:7; 5:21; 6:22,23; 2 Corinthians 4:17; Galatians 6:8; 2 Thessalonians 2:2; 1 Timothy 1:16; 6:12; 2 Timothy 2:10; Titus 1:2; 3:7; Philemon 5; Hebrews 5:9; 9:12,15; 1 Peter 5:10; 1 John 1:2; 2:25; 3:15; 5:11,13,20; Jude 21. In these references, the word “everlasting” (*aiionios*) is most often used with “life,” but sometimes with “glory,” “consolation,” “redemption,” or “inheritance.” It is doubtful that anyone who has read any of these references to “everlasting life” has seriously considered that the word *aiionios* means anything other than its definition “perpetual.” That is, “everlasting” means just that. Thus, the reward for the righteous will be an endless life with God in His dwelling place, with glory and honor from Him.

Everlasting punishment

Luke 16:9 is not the only time that *aiionios* is used for the duration of the punishment of the wicked in the life to come. Matthew 18:8 says, “Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into *everlasting fire*.” Matthew 25:41-46 informs us of what our Lord Jesus Christ will say to the wicked as they are sent to their eternal dwelling place: “Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, *Depart from me, ye cursed,*

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(continued)

into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was a hungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee a hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. *And these shall go away into everlasting punishment:* but the righteous into life eternal.” Mark 3:29 warns, “But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of *eternal damnation.*” And 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 says, “And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: *who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.*” Finally, Jude 7 says that Sodom and Gomorrha “are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.” Does the word *aionios* have a different meaning for the duration of the punishment for the wicked than it does for the duration of the reward for the righteous?

The opposite of temporary

An examination of some other instances in which the Greek word *aionios* is used in the New Testament should remove any doubt that “eternal judgment” means that the duration of the reward for the righteous *and* the punishment of the wicked truly will be eternal. For one thing, the same word is used twice within the same verse, applied to both: “And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal” (Matt 25:46). Would anyone seriously think that Christ had two different meanings in mind for the same word he used twice in the same sentence? Furthermore, 2 Corinthians 4:18 uses *aionios* to define the duration of the things which are unseen as the complete *opposite* of what is only temporary in nature: “While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are *temporal*; but the things which are not seen are *eternal.*” For this definition to be true, it is impossible that either heaven or hell could be a temporary dwelling place for their respective inhabitants. The same word *aionios* is used to describe God (Rom 16:26), the power of God (1 Tim 6:16), the Holy Spirit (Heb 9:14), the kingdom of God (2 Pet 1:11), and the gospel of Christ (Heb 13:20; Rev 14:6). As God is eternal, so is heaven His dwelling place, which will be the eternal home for the saved. And so also is hell, originally prepared for the devil and his angels, which will be the eternal dwelling place for the wicked.