

Chapter 13

Eonian Life: Knowing God & His Son

It seems that so much of the gospel message today is about process—"how to get saved"—and where one goes once one is saved (generally, the message is exclusively about going to heaven). Within this message is the expectation of eternal life; some will attain to it, but most will not. But is this truly the heart of the gospel. What does eternal life really mean? I would imagine most see it as living outside of time, strolling on the golden streets of the heavenly Jerusalem as they occupy their heavenly mansions. But how does all of this fit into God's ultimate purpose of all? Or, does it fit in at all? I submit that it is not the good news and it does not fit in. The heart of the gospel of Jesus Christ is to know the only true God, and Jesus the Messiah, the one God sent. This is it in a nutshell, as they say. And this heart is for all of humanity, none excluded. Knowing God is a major tenet of the purpose of the ages.

At this point, you might want to refresh yourself with chapter two (*Ages, Not Eternity*), for what follows deals with eonian life and not eternal life, at least, as many see it.

Without doubt, many would quote Jesus as their proof that the promise to believers who exercised their so-called *free will* is *eternal life*. After all, isn't this what all the mainline translations tell us: *whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal [aiōnios] life* (John 3:16)? However, the more literal translations use the expression *eonian* or *aionian life* (or, similar expressions, such as *life age-during*), based on the Greek adjective *aiōnios*, which should get its meaning from the companion noun *aion*, which means *age*. In other words, *eonian life* refers to life in an age, not in eternity. For example: *everyone who is believing in Him should not be perishing, but may be having **life eonian*** [CLV]; *everyone believing into him may not perish but obtain **aionian Life*** [WED]; *everyone who is believing in him may not perish, but may have **life age-during*** [YLT]; *everyone who believes in him should not be lost but should share in **the life of God's new age*** (KNT).

Another traditional rendering is found in Mark: *But that he will receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and **in the age to come, eternal life*** (Mark 10:30 NASB). Again, the same literal translations use the expressions *life eonian* [CLV], *aionian life* [WED], and *life age-during* [YLT], *life of the age to come* (KNT).

Taken at face value and not reading the concept of eternity (timelessness or endlessness) into Jesus' words, it becomes apparent that Jesus promised His disciples life in the age to come, and He called it *aionian* life, not eternal life. He could have used the Greek *aidios* life, which most closely speaks of an endless life, but He did not use this word here or any other place in the gospels. Clearly, Jesus made no mention of life outside of time. He promised His disciples life in the age or eon that was coming.

Identifying this age is critical to our understanding of eonian life. So, to what age was Jesus referring? To answer this correctly, we must put ourselves back in that day and not project the answer out from our present day, a common mistake of eschatological study.

The ancient prophets saw a new day and all of Judah was looking for it when the Anointed One stood in their midst. The time promised through the prophets had come. Unfortunately, their expectation of a new age was off a bit. They were looking for their Messiah to come and establish a political kingdom, setting them free from the rule of non-Jews, as they rose up to be an independent nation, even the head of the nations.

What they didn't expect was a messiah who was going to die for the sin of the world and establish a spiritual kingdom in hearts first that would ultimately and openly manifest to engulf all nations, bringing them all under the open authority of King Jesus. They also didn't expect a messiah who was going to draw all men from all nations unto Himself, meaning the Jews would no longer have exclusive rights to the Kingdom of God, simply on the basis of their gene pool. The Messiah of Israel was to become the Messiah (Anointed One, the Christ) who is all in all. To keep adding to their missed expectations; they didn't expect a messiah to die, be buried, rise up from the grave, be seen by many, then ascend into a cloud to appear in heaven before the heavenly Father, being exalted and glorified, and seated at the right hand of the throne of glory.

But the shock was yet to come, for in 70 AD, as prophesied by Jesus, God sent the Roman army to utterly destroy Jerusalem and the temple and thus render biblical Judaism—with its animal sacrifices and a physical temple and its priestly class—obsolete and blotted out. Thus, the Mosaic age came to an abrupt end, never to be reinstated again. In so doing, God set Christianity free from any ties to the former age, no longer to be identified with Judaism. It was even the end of *the day of Lord*, a long one thousand-year day (from 930 BC to 70 AD), that began when Solomon's United Kingdom of Judah and Israel was split up and ultimately dispersed after Solomon's death in 930 BC. Simply, for the ones who had nailed Jesus to the cross, it was the last nail hammered into their coffin, metaphorically speaking of the death of all that defined the Jewish religion of that day that centered in a physical temple with daily sacrifices. It was over as far as God was concerned.

But the good news is that heaven's door is now opened wide for all humanity to enter into the presence of God; no longer is anyone barred based on their ethnic background. The sign over the door now reads: *All are Welcome!*

A new age had arrived with the resurrection of King Jesus in 33 AD that was fully inaugurated in 70 AD. This is the coming age that Jesus spoke of; this is the age in which we who believe have entered—having been brought into the Messiah as a new creation. In other words, the age has come upon all who have believed (and yet will believe) over the last 21 centuries. N.T. Wright, in his *Kingdom New Testament*, calls it *the life of God's age*. Those who have been rescued and placed in this age are called to reign with King Jesus today and to continue reigning with Him in whatever ages are yet on the horizon.

This is *eonian life*—*life in God's age*, and we, who believe, possess this life now while we continue to be embodied in corruptible, mortal flesh. In a sense, it has nothing to do with the mortal vessel we occupy at the moment. It has everything to do with the life we now enjoy in the Messiah. We have been placed in Christ, and He has come to abide in us through His spirit. This all speaks to life in this age and the ages to come.

This may be difficult to grasp, given what so many of us have been taught; eonian life is not about a life in eternity or exclusively in heaven but a life associated with both earth and heaven. Today, we are firmly planted on earth in bodies of flesh and, yet, we are seated with King Jesus in the heavenlies. A new day is coming in the next age when we will we literally transcend both the heavenly realm (i.e., God's dimension) and the earthly realm as the two come together as God has always intended them to be. In a sense, we currently have both realms within us but, in that day, they will manifest to the glory of God. This day comes when we are transformed into spirit-activated bodies, conformed to the image of Christ, by the same power He has to subject all things to Himself.

Now, as wonderful as all this is, there is something far greater to the meaning of eonian life; a meaning that goes to the very heart of God and His Son. It is discovered in Jesus' prayer to His Father as the cross was closing in on Him. Jesus lifted up His eyes to heaven and prayed...

(1) "Father," he said, "the moment has come. Glorify your son, so that your son may glorify you. (2) Do this in the same way as you did when you gave him authority over all flesh, so that he could give the life of God's coming age to everyone you gave him. (3) And by 'life of God's age' I mean this: that they should know you, the only true God, and Jesus the Messiah, the one you sent. (John 17:1-3 KNT)

Jesus' looked beyond the cross to the new age that was about to dawn; it was the coming age of new creation—to the: *Behold, I am making all things new*. His heart's desire was for all those who the Father had given to Him to have life in this new age, to become new creations. (Of course, I am reading other scripture into this.) But what was truly the heart cry of Jesus in that hour was that these same ones would know the Father and Jesus (i.e., Himself) as the true Messiah that was sent by the Father. This is how Jonathan Mitchell renders verse 3.

"Now THIS is (exists being) eonian life (life pertaining to the ages): namely, that they may progressively come to intimately and experientially know You, the only true and real (genuine) God – even (or: and) Jesus Christ, Whom You send forth as an Emissary (Apostle). (John 17:3 JM-NT)

The knowing was not simply a one-off experience as some new head knowledge. No; it was to progressively come to intimately and experientially know the Father. Interestingly, Mitchell refers to eonian life as pertaining to the ages, just not the age that was coming with the cross. This eonian knowing of God was and is to progress through to the consummation of the ages. It is a never ending knowing. In this regard, it could be called *eternal life*, as well. Stated another way—life in God's age(s) is to experientially know God and His Son.

As believers, we must not be so quick to discount the ages and place our entire emphasis on the eternal or eternity. Yes; we will be forever coming to know God, but God has much more that He is going to do with our earth and its occupant, humanity, that will unfold, not only in our current age (birthed at the cross), but also in the ages to come. As emphasized previously, the ages are a significant tenet of scripture. A fact that is often overlooked or not understood because of mistranslations of the word *aion* is that through His Son God also made (formed; constructed) the ages (eons) (Hebrews 1:2). The ages have been set by God through His Son. Why? So that God's purpose and plan may be achieved, that is, that all humanity will come to know God the Father and His Son, our Lord Jesus. As Peter reminds us: *The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish [to destroy themselves] but for all to come to repentance [a change of mind] (2 Peter 3:9)*. This is the mercy of God.

Now, one might be wondering if eonian life and immortality are the same. In my view, eonian life is not exactly the same as immortal life, but they are tightly joined together. We see Paul joining the two as one in Romans 2:7. If one has eonian life, then they have immortal life as well; it is simply a matter of timing when one comes into immortality. The major difference is that immortal life is not dependent on the eons, or time and space. As I see it, eonian life is life in this age and the ages to come, and immortality is life beyond death, regardless of the age. In a sense, they are both relational words. Eonian life relates to knowing God and immortality relates to being totally separated from death (and sin) and being brought into full or complete (nothing lacking) conformance with the life of the Son. The goal for humanity or, we should say, God's purpose for humanity is for all to come into both eonian life and immortality; again, it's just a matter of timing.

After all, Paul wrote: **The King alone possesses immortality (1 Timothy 6:16). No one [man] has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven: the Son of Man (John 3:13)**. In other words, as far as we are told, no one of the human race has immortality today and no man except Jesus the new creation man is in heaven today.

Immortality relates to the body that comes about with the redemption of our body through resurrection and transformation; a future event for which Christians should be waiting eagerly (Romans 8:23).

Clearly, immortality is life beyond death, never to be subjected to the possibility of death. This should be the hope and expectation of all believers. However, it would be remiss not to add that it is also the ultimate destiny of all when, at the consummation of the eons, God the Father is all in all.

The good news is that eonian life with a promise of immortality is available for all today. There is a way into the presence of God—it is through His Son, King Jesus.

[*The Ultimate Purpose of God \(complete book\)*](#)