



This article is the 2nd part of a 9 part series on Universal Restoration vs Eternal Torment (hell). I recommend reading the [introduction first](#) if you haven't already. ([link below](#))

- As I said in the introduction, The existence of Eternal Torment rests on two pillars: The translation of a single word (*Aion*, and its adjective form *aionios*), and the example of “hell” being a burning trash heap. In this article, we’re going to look at the Greek word “????” ([Aion](#)), and it’s adjective form “????????” ([aionios](#)). Both of which are often translated “forever” or “eternal”.

To give an example of a verse using aion/aionios to support Eternal Torment (hell):

46 “These will go away into **eternal** (*aionios*) punishment, but the righteous into **eternal**

(*aionios*) life.”

The obvious conclusion is that if the life is eternal – and we know Christians will live forever – then the punishment must be eternal also. However, the obvious solution isn't always the correct one. In fact, everyone agrees that *aion* and *aionios* do **not** mean eternal... but they still translate them that way.

(*Curious huh?*)

We'll start by looking at *aion*'s definition.

The Definition Of Aion

Let's first look at [the definition of aion](#) according to BibleHub.com:

Aion: **an age**, a cycle (*of time*), especially of the present age as contrasted with the future age, and of one of a series of ages stretching to infinity

Aion is sometimes used to indicate forever, but more on that in a moment. Another definition from the HELPS Words studies:

165 *ai?n* (see also the cognate adjective, [166](#) /*ai?nios*, “age-long”) – properly, **an age** (*era*, “time-span”), characterized by a specific quality (type of existence).

And according to Thayer's Greek Lexicon:

Aion: **age** (*Latinaevum*, which is *????* with the Aeolic digamma), **a human lifetime** (in Homer, Herodotus, Pindar, Tragic poets), **life itself** (Homer *Iliad* 5, 685 ?? ??? ????? *????* etc.).

And now Strong's Concordance:

#165 properly, **an age**; by extension, perpetuity (also past); by implication, the world; specially (Jewish) a Messianic period (present or future)

And now the Abbot Smith Lexicon:

???? A space of time, as, a lifetime, generation, period of history, an indefinitely long period ; in NT of an indefinitely long period, an age, eternity... ...the ages or world-periods which when summed up make eternity

According to Everyone, Aion definitely means “Age”.

Age here means a (*long*) span of time with a beginning and an end. There's no disagreement about this from anyone that I can see. You can look at [every time Aion is used in the New Testament](#) and see for yourself. That link points to a page where you can see every single time Aion is used in the New Testament (*in a few different translations*).

Please pay special attention to the translation abbreviated “INT:”. INT stands for “Interlinear”, which gives a literal meaning of the word. You'll notice the Interlinear says “age” (*or “ages”*) virtually every single time. However, some of the other translations say “forever” or “eternal” even though everyone agrees the word means “age.”

Why?

Because of the construction of the sentence.

How The New Testament Uses Aion

There are three Primary ways Aion is used. (*I'll give examples in a minute.*)

1. To indicate a literal Age, or span of time with beginning and an end.
2. To indicate “the Ages”
3. To indicate “all of time.”
4. Revelation 14 (*unique in it's construction*)

We'll cover each in turn.

Use #1: To Indicate a Literal Age With a Beginning and End

A good example of this is the end of the parable of the wheat and tares.

Matthew 13:40

40 “So just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at

the end of the **age** (*Aion*).

Jesus clearly means that Aion (*the age*) has an end here. The translation of Aion in such cases is undisputed by anyone. Sometimes it's translated "world", or another similar word. (*I wish they'd stick to the actual Greek, but I digress*).

Use #2: To Indicate All Of "The Ages"

A good example is the end of the Lord's Prayer.

Matthew 13:40

13 And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory **forever** (*Aion*). Amen.

In the Greek, It doesn't say "forever". There is a Greek word that means "forever" or "eternal". (*we'll get to it in a bit*) However, the Bible only uses it twice and this verse isn't one of those places. Instead, Jesus used the word "Aion" which means ages. Further, the translators have removed the Greek definite article (*equivalent to our word "the"*), which is before the word aion in the original Greek.

A more literal reading would look like this:

Matthew 13:40

13 And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil, for yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory **for the ages**. (*plural*) Amen.

Two things to notice:

First, the word Aion there is plural. Not singular (*one*), but plural (*more than one*). Jesus – being God – was doubtless aware of the Greek word that means "eternal" or "forever", but he chose not to use it.

Second, Jesus' meaning is quite clear even though He doesn't use the word for forever/eternal. The Jews and Greek always thought of the world as divided into different ages. We still think of it like that today. For example, there's the Bronze Age, the Iron Age, The Dark Ages, The Middles Ages, and most recently the Information Age.

Jesus was saying the the kingdom, power and glory of ALL those Ages belong to God.

In this context, when the Jews/Greeks said “The Ages” they literally meant “The Ages.”

I realize this might sound a little strange to our modern ears, but that’s how they thought of things in those days. The disciples even asked Jesus when the “*end of the age (aion)*” was. They recognized that there would be another “Age” (*Aion*) after theirs.

God certainly is the God of “the Ages”, and throughout all those ages the power and glory rightfully rests with Him. The Greek way of phrasing it might be strange to our modern English ears, but it’s perfectly consistent with Ancient Greek phrasing.

Another example:

Luke 1:33

33 and He will reign over the house of Jacob **forever** (*aion*), and His kingdom will have no end

Again, while Forever is one way of looking at it, it doesn’t actually capture the Greek. For starters, they had to eliminate a two Greek words to make “forever” fit. They removed the Greek word “[eis](#)”, which basically means “into”, “unto”, “through”, etc; and the [Greek Definite article](#), which is equivalent to our word “the”. Further, the word Aion here is plural.

So here’s how it reads in a more literal Greek translation with the two removed words included and Aion translated properly and in plural:

Luke 1:33

33 and He will reign over the house of Jacob ~~forever~~ **through the Ages**, and His kingdom will have no end

That makes a lot of sense to me, but “through the forevers” sounds nonsensical. Why didn’t the translators simply translate the words that are there instead of removing some words and changing others? (*a common problem I’ve found in many passages.*) I suppose the effect is similar and the meaning of the passage doesn’t change much, but it’s not quite accurate.

sigh

C’est La vie.

Use #3: To Indicate “all of time”

A good example of this is the closing of Philippians.

Philippians 4:20

20 Now to our God and Father be the glory **forever** (*aion*) and **ever** (*aion*).
Amen.

Again, there is only one Greek word for “forever” and it’s not used here (*though we’ll get to it soon*). A more literal translation of that passage would read:

Philippians 4:20

20 Now to our God and Father be the glory **to the ages** (*plural*) **of the ages** (*plural*). Amen

Two things to notice here:

First, the Greek word for “and” (???) appears only once in this passage (*connecting God and Father*) and it’s not between the two uses of Aion. So this can’t be “Ages and Ages” because the word “and” isn’t there.

Second, Both instances of the word Aion here are Plural. It’s can’t be “Forever of the Forever” because that simply makes no sense. Forever by definition is singular. There’s only one forever because – by definition – forever can’t end.

So what does “Ages of the Ages” mean?

Exactly what it says: “Ages of the Ages”?

Remember, the Jews and Greeks of the day divided time into ages. (*much like we do today*). Further, they could divide Ages into smaller ages (*just like we do today*). For example, We divide the Middle Ages into the early, middle and late middle ages. So you have Ages within Ages.

So “Ages of Ages” sounds to me like they are going out of their way to say “*all of the (sub) ages in all of the ages*”. That is, every Age and every subdivision of Ages.

It’s a poetic way of saying “all of time”.

(Notice that the Greek phrasing includes past times as well as future times. Our typical English phrasing only includes the future.)

This jives with the typical usage of the Greek phrase “Ages of the Ages” (?????? ????). It’s almost exclusively used to talk about God’s power or glory, which is certainly throughout all the Ages.

However, please notice that **aion** **STILL** means “Age” not “Forever”.

(Just like all the Greek lexicons agree it does.)

#4: Revelation 14:11

(Note: I don’t think – and can prove – that this verse in Revelation isn’t even talking about punishment in the afterlife. For a complete understanding of why, you’ll need to read most of my ~25k word [article on Revelation](#). I’m only treating this for those who don’t share my view on Revelation.)

The Greek construction of Revelation 14:11 is unique and not found anywhere else in the Bible. Here it is in the NASB

Revelation 14:11

11 And the smoke of their torment goes up **forever** (*aion*) and **ever** (*aion*); they have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.”

Now, more literally in the Greek:

Revelation 14:11

11 And the smoke of their torment goes up to **ages** of **ages**; and those worshiping the beast and its image have no rest day and night, and if anyone receives the mark of its name.”

The Greek there simply says “Ages of Ages”, and lacks the word “the” present in #3 above. This verse is used to support the eternal torment position, but I honestly find that position slightly comical for several reasons.

First, those statements lack a proper **context** of smoke and it’s use in the rest of the bible. More than any other book of the Bible, Revelation **requires** an understanding of the rest of the Bible to understand it’s meaning. (You can read [my article on Revelation](#) if you disagree) The scripture the John References here is found in Isaiah:

(It's a prophecy about the destruction of Edom)

Isaiah 34:10

9 Its streams will be turned into pitch, And its loose earth into brimstone, And its land will become burning pitch.

10 **It will not be quenched night or day; Its smoke will go up forever.** From generation to generation it will be desolate; None will pass through it forever and ever.

[Edom](#) was located directly south of Israel, in the northern part of modern day Jordan. Have you heard of a fire that's been burning there for ~2500+ years?

I thought not.

So then did Isaiah lie?

Of course not.

Like Revelation, Isaiah is primarily apocalyptic literature. This was a popular form of writing at the time and it used grand symbols to convey important ideas. (*I have a whole section explaining apocalyptic literature in [my article on Revelation](#)*)

Just like the smoke from Edom didn't go up "forever", so also the smoke in revelation isn't meant to be taken literally.

Second, even if the smoke goes up forever, that doesn't mean the torment goes on forever. Or to quote another author:

The reason eternal torment is read from this passage is from the following line of reasoning:

1. The burning alive of the worshippers of the beast creates smoke that rises.
2. The smoke rises for ever and ever.
3. If the smoke rises for ever and ever, then the source, the burning, continues for ever and ever.
4. The burning causes torment.
5. Therefore, the unsaved are tormented in fire for ever and ever.

Of course, I should point out that many traditionalists today who appeal to this passage don't believe there is literal fire in hell (*which causes its own set of problems*).

[Source](#)

But we just saw from Isaiah that smoke going up forever doesn't mean the burning continues forever. Further, the Bible has other things to say about smoke. (*Remember, context is crucial in Revelation*)

Exodus 29:18

9 You shall offer up **in smoke** the whole ram on the altar; it is a burnt offering to the LORD: **it is a soothing aroma**, an offering by fire to the LORD.

The smoke is a “*soothing aroma*” to God. Just like with Edom, the punishment was dealt out and it was terrible. However – according to Exodus – the smoke from a sacrifice is a “*soothing aroma*” to God. The punishment was dealt and God's wrath was appeased. And while the torment isn't explicitly stated to be forever, the smoke is (*which indicates God is appeased*) does go up for a long time.

(*For the sake of argument, we'll pretend I think this phrasing means “ages of the ages”. For the actual reason I don't think this verse applies to Eternal Torment you'll need to read most of my ~25k word [article on Revelation](#).*)

How The New Testament Uses Aion's Adjective Form

In the Greek language, words can have a different form depending on how they are used. For example, the word “aion” has an adjective form: “[aionios](#)” **It's the same word, but this form is only used as an adjective**. It adds the properties of Aion to the word it's modifying.

For example, “rock” is a noun in English. Its adjective form is “rocky”, which means “of or relating to rocks; rocklike”. The noun rock and the adjective rocky are very similar to each other for obvious reasons. It's the same with Greek nouns and adjectives. Since Aion means “age” (*and everyone agrees on this*) Then aionios adds “of ages” or “relating to the ages” or “age-like” to any word it's modifying.

Let's look at some of the places it's used.

1 Timothy 1:17

17 Now to the King **eternal** (*Aion*), immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever (*Ages of the Ages*). Amen

It seems conclusive that the adjective form (*aionios*) must mean eternal here right? I mean, God is eternal and since aionios is used to describe Him, aionios must mean eternal right?

Well, not really.

How many times have you heard the phrase “Rock of Ages?”

The Bible uses that phrase to describe God. It means He is the greatest/best rock throughout all the ages. We still use this terminology today.

In English, we talk about “*the game of the century*”, “*the fight of his life*” or the “*bell of the ball*”. By “*Game of the Century*” we mean the greatest/best game that could be found in the entire century. By “*fight of his life*” we mean the worst or most dangerous fight of his entire life. By “*bell of the ball*”, we mean the most beautiful woman who attended the ball.

So with this understanding, let’s look at the verse again:

1 Timothy 1:17

17 Now to the King ~~eternal~~ of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever (*Ages of the Ages*). Amen

God certainly is the “King of Ages” wouldn’t you agree? Not only is He the greatest King in all the ages, He rules over all the ages. Let’s look at another place.

1 Timothy 6:16

17 who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see. To Him be honor and ~~eternal~~ dominion of ages! Amen.

I could be wrong, but doesn’t God having the “dominion of ages” make perfect sense? He has dominion over all the ages so it makes perfect sense.

Hebrews 9:14

14 how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal (*aionios*) Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

I certainly think the Holy Spirit is the “Spirit of Ages” in the sense of being the greatest Spirit throughout all the ages. I’ll admit the phrasing is a little odd to our modern ears. Again though, this was a perfectly natural way to phrase things for the time.

There are tons of other scriptures that fall into this category.

If you exchange “eternal” or “forever” with “of ages” it makes perfect sense in nearly every instance. The few that aren’t immediately obvious (*Luke 1:33 for example, which we’ve already covered*) are usually clarified by putting back words translators removed in order to make forever or eternal fit.

Perhaps one more example?

Eternal (aionios) Life

John 3:16

16 “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have **eternal** (*aionios*) life.

Yes I know, shocker right? The phrase most often translated “eternal life” doesn’t actually mean “eternal”. There are other places to go in the Bible where it says Christians will spend an eternity with God. (*I would read Revelation chapters 21 and 22 if you are in doubt.*)

But that’s not the point of eternal life, and it never has been. Lets go back to the definition of Aion (*noun form*) to clarify:

165 *ai?n* (see also the cognate adjective, **166** /*ai?nios*, “age-long”) – properly, **an Age (era**, “time-span”), **characterized by a specific quality (type of existence).**

And now the adjective form:

166 *ai?nios* (*an adjective, derived from 165 /ai?n* “**an age, having a particular character and quality**”) – properly, “age-like” (“like-an-age”), i.e. an “age-characteristic” (**the quality describing a particular age**); (figuratively) **the unique quality (reality) of God’s life at work in the believer**, i.e. as the Lord manifests His self-existent life (as it is in His sinless abode of heaven).

...

[**166** (*ai?nios*) **does not focus on the future per se**, but rather on the **quality of the age** (**165** /*ai?n*) **it relates to**. Thus believers live in “eternal (**166** /*ai?nios*) life” right now, experiencing this **quality of God’s life now as a present possession**.

“Eternal life” has never been about the duration of life – which happens to be infinite – it’s always about the quality of the life. This would be obvious if you looked at the tenses of the words. It’s a little more obvious in the Greek, but it carries over to the English too, we just miss it most of the time.

John says that we “have” – present tense – “eternal (*aionios*) life.

“Eternal life” isn’t something we get in the future; it’s something we have right now. If you look at it that way, “eternal life” doesn’t make a lot of sense. It makes some sense (*because we will live forever*) but not a lot because “*eternal life*” starts right now.

I want to be clear; I’m not teaching a “prosperity gospel” or “word of faith” theology.

God’s idea of a higher quality life is one that more accurately reflects His character. He is far more concerned with our character than our comfort. However, living a moral life according to God’s commands will make you happier. It may not be easier, but it will be better.

EDIT: I recently found this video by The Bible Project that sums up this understanding quite well. Notably, the presenter does believe in eternal conscious torment (hell), though he has a softer and more nuanced view of hell, notably shaped by C.S. Lewis’s book “The Great Divorce”. (*He re-frames it as C.S. Lewis did, focusing on God respecting our choice not to have a relationship with Him, and thus saying we “create” our own hell by rejecting God.*)

His understanding is spot-on with the word definitions we’ve been looking at. Eternal life starts right now, the moment you become a Christian, not at some future point in time. Anyway, edit over and back to the article.

Understanding that Eternal life starts right now changes things. So does understanding it’s primarily about the quality not the duration. Remember, the definition specifically says it’s about the quality/type of life (*one that reflects God more*). With that understanding, reading John 3:16 as the “life of ages” makes a LOT of sense.

Just like like “Rock of Ages” refers to the greatest rock in all the ages, so too “life of ages” refers to the greatest life in all the ages.

That’s what Jesus gave us on the cross.

Through his blood, we have access the most high God of the universe and are saved from His wrath. Plus, we have His Holy Spirit living within us all day, every day. He gives us “the peace that passes understanding”, He gives us the fruit of the spirit (*love, joy, peace, etc*) and protects us from the works of the flesh. Not only that, but when we die we get to spend forever with Him in paradise.

Doesn't that sound like the "life of ages"?

Sure, life is hard sometimes, but that doesn't make it less good. In fact, the "life of ages" is so amazing that we know God will take our worst trials and recycle them to make us more like Himself. Could it get any better?

So let's look at it again with that understanding in mind.

John 3:16

16 "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have ~~eternal life~~ **the life of ages**.

Not only does that understanding make more sense in light of the tenses (*in both English and Greek*), but it's a more accurate translation too.

Further, the Bible spends a LOT of time telling us how to have a better life, but very little time telling us we'll live forever. You can see where God's priorities are, it's always on the **quality/type** of life we live, not the **duration** of the life we live.

(otherwise martyrs would be in trouble)

You can hardly open a single page of the Bible (especially in the New Testament) without instructions for how to live better.

By contrast, finding verses that tell us we'll live forever (*in heaven*) are much rarer. They exist, but verses telling us how to live better are **at least** 100x more common. Again, you can see where God's priorities are.

Literally **every single time** you see the phrase "eternal life" in your Bible, it's not "eternal" life in the Greek. It's "Aionios life" or the "life of ages". (???? ??????). And at the risk of beating a dead horse, it's about the quality/type of life, not the duration.

Back to the Universal Restoration vs Eternal Torment Discussion

Let's go back to the verse we started with:

Matthew 25:46

46 "These will go away into **eternal** (*aionios*) punishment, but the righteous into **eternal** (*aionios*) life."

Hopefully the true meaning of this passage jumps out at you from what we've already discussed. But just in case I'll clarify.

The phrase "eternal life" here is "aionios life", which refers to the type/quality of the life not the duration. Just like like "Rock of Ages" refers to the greatest rock in all the ages, so too "life of ages" refers to the greatest life in all the ages. "Rock of Ages" doesn't tell you about the duration of the rock; it tells you about the quality/type of rock.

So it is with the "life of ages".

So too it is with the "punishment of ages".

The judgement in view here is certainly the "punishment of ages", meaning the "worst punishment in all the ages". To say there's a worse punishment ignores large chunks of the Bible. This is the righteous judgement of God on unrighteous sinners to bring them to repentance.

Again, I'll remind you that almost everyone agrees that aion/aionios mean "Age".

This fact isn't in dispute.

You can go back to the beginning of this article and re-read the definitions I copy/pasted from five different well-respected sources. However – despite this near universal agreement – nearly every translation insists on translating aion/aionios as "eternal" or "forever".

Why?

Just a guess, but I'd say "Doctrinal bias". And I'm not saying there's any malice on the part of the translators. Unfortunately, most of us (*myself included*) often aren't aware of our own biases.

As I said in the introduction to this series (*and will prove in another article*) Eternal Torment didn't become popular until the original Greek fell out of common use. **It wasn't until the original Greek was abandoned and Latin became the common tongue that Eternal Torment began to rise to prominence.**

Looking at some of these verses, it's easy to see why.

Let's look at the verse again

Matthew 25:46

46 "These will go away into ~~eternal~~ (the) punishment **of ages**, but the righteous into ~~eternal~~ (the) life **of ages**."

Makes sense to me. Let's try the other good "hell verse".

2 Thessalonians 1:9

9 These will pay the penalty of **eternal destruction**, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power

Again, the “destruction of ages” is certainly the worst in all the ages because it means you’ll be separated from God Himself. Also, the definition for the word translated destruction is interesting here:

3639 ólethros (from *ollymi* “destroy”) – **properly, ruination** with its full, destructive results (LS). 3639 /ólethros (“ruination”) **however does not imply “extinction” (annihilation). Rather it emphasizes the consequent loss that goes with the complete “undoing.”**

The “loss of ages” makes sense here. Further, you’ll be “ruined” in the sense of abandoning all chance of a reward in the afterlife.

The “Unforgivable” Sin

Mark 3:29

29 but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin “

Until I looked at the Greek in this verse, I had several contenders in my head for the “*worst translation of a Bible verse*” award category. I thought those few verses were as bad as it got.

I was wrong.

Hands down, Mark 3:29 wins the award for most consistently HORRIBLY translated verse in the entire Bible.

This might take a minute to unravel. And just so you know I’m not blowing smoke, you can double check everything I’m saying on [the interlinear version of Mark 3:29](#). (*which has both the Greek and English so you can compare*)

Mark 3:29

29 but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit **never** has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin “

The word translated “never” does **NOT** mean “never.” It’s the Greek word “ou?” ([ou](#)) and it means “not”. Here’s the definition:

Short Definition: no, **not**

Definition: no, **not**.

3756 ou – no (“not”). 3756 (*ou*) *objectively* negates a statement, “*ruling it out as fact.*”

The Greek word “ou” is used over 1600 times in the New Testament. Nearly every time it’s translated as “no” or “not”... because that’s what it means.

There is a Greek word that means “never”, and it’s the word “oude?” ([oude](#)). Its only meaning is “never” but the Bible doesn’t use it here. So while your English translation tells you that this sin will “never” be forgiven, that’s **not** what the Greek says.

But worse, virtually every single translation eliminates – leaves out completely – three whole Greek words!

And they aren’t stylistic words either; the verse with these words COMPLETELY changes the meaning.

And just in case you’re wondering, yes these verses are in the source text that virtually all new Testament versions are translated from. The overwhelming vast majority of Bible translations use the Nestle-Aland Novum Testamentum Graece for the New Testament. If you can read Greek, you can check [Mark 3:29 in the Nestle-Aland 28th edition](#) to see that these three words are indeed present. (*If you can’t read Greek, just look for the words in verse 29 that look like the words in the picture below.*)

For some reason, these words were removed – presumably intentionally – by the Bible translators. Maybe they thought they didn’t belong, but they are in every single reputable Greek New Testament. Everyone agrees they belong, but no one puts them in.

How can we know what God said if the translators change the text!!!

Their job is translating, not editorializing what God Himself said. (*Makes me wonder if anything else pointing to Universalism has been removed. I’m currently going through the New Testament in Greek, and if I find anything I’ll update this article.*)

But I digress.

Below is a screenshot of the interlinear Bible I linked to above. I’ve highlighted the words that translators have removed.

(*Note: Greek words always have several different endings depending on how they are used. It’s one of the features of the Greek language, which I explain in [this article](#). So while I’ve been using the “naked” version “aion” and “aionios”, in Greek it will always have a suffix to tell you what part of speech the word is. In the verse below, it’s “oude?” (ai?na) instead of the “naked” version*

◀ Mark 3:29 ▶

Mark 3 Interlinear

3739 [e]	1161 [e]	302 [e]	987 [e]	1519 [e]	3588 [e]	4151 [e]	3588 [e]	40 [e]
hos	d'	an	blasphēmēsē	eis	to	Pneuma	to	Hagion
29 ὅς	δ'	ἄν	βλασφημήσῃ	εἰς	τὸ	Πνεῦμα	τὸ	Ἅγιον
whoever	moreover	anyhow	shall blaspheme	against	the	Spirit	-	Holy
RelPro-NMS	Conj	Prtcl	V-ASA-3S	Prep	Art-ANS	N-ANS	Art-ANS	Adj-ANS

859 [e]	1519 [e]	3588 [e]	165 [e]	235 [e]	1777 [e]	1510 [e]	166 [e]	265 [e]
aphesin	eis	ton	aiōna	alla	enochos	estin	aiōniou	hamartēmatos
ἄφεσιν	εἰς	τὸν	αἰῶνα	, ἀλλὰ	ἔνοχος	ἐστίν	αἰωνίου	ἁμαρτήματος
forgiveness	to	the	eternity	but	guilty	is	[of] eternal	sin
N-AFS	Prep	Art-AMS	N-AMS	Conj	Adj-NMS	V-PIA-3S	Adj-GNS	N-GNS



Completely Removed From Most Translations

Here's the verse again in the NASB, and most other translations render it almost identically:

Mark 3:29

29 but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin “

Do you see the problem? If you translate the word “not” correctly and include the three missing words the verse completely changes its meaning.

Notice, the word “eis” – which we’ve already talked about in Luke 1:33 (*through the ages*) – is one of the removed words. **Also, in this verse – unlike Luke 1:33 – the word aion is singular, not plural.** So “through the Age” would be an appropriate translation.

Here it is with a more correct translation:

Mark 3:29

29 but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit **does not have** forgiveness **through the age**, but is guilty of the sin of ages.”

That has a completely different meaning. It lines up much better with Jesus’ words in Matthew

Matthew 12:32

29 “Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, **either in this age or in the age to come**.

Nowhere does it say the sin **can’t** be forgiven.

In Mark, Jesus says it won’t be forgiven “through the age”, which was presumably Jesus’ current “age”. In Matthew, Jesus said blasphemy against the Spirit won’t be forgiven “in this age” (*which was His current age, at the very end of the age of the Jews*); or the “the age to come” (*The church age*)

But what about the age(s) afterward?

In Matthew 24:3, the disciples ask when is the “end of the age”, so there’s certainly other ages coming. The last 2000 years have been the “church age”.

At the very least, sometime after the church age is the “age” of the New Heavens and New Earth described in Revelation.

Why couldn’t the “unforgivable” sin be forgiven then?

According to Jesus word’s here – when translated fully and without omission – that’s a possibility.

The Hebrew Word Typically Translated Forever/Eternal

We’ve spent a long time discussing the word Aion/aionios. However, there is one passage from the Old Testament that leans on this also. It could be considered a parallel passage to Matthew 25:46 (*some go to aionios punishment, others to aionios life*).

Daniel 12:2

2 “Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to **everlasting** (*olam*) life, but the others to disgrace and **everlasting** (*olam*) contempt.

The word most commonly translated forever or eternal in the Old Testament is the word "[olam](#)", sometimes spelled "owlam".

The definition of the word olam is a little incomplete from my usual source ([Biblehub.com](#), which typically has at least three different lexicons on one page). They only include a short definition of "forever" and a long definition of "long duration, antiquity, futurity". Therefore, I had to dig a little deeper to discover the full meaning.

Here is the meaning of the word olam from according to Jeff Brenner of the Ancient Hebrew Research Center: *(he doesn't believe in Universal Restoration to my knowledge)*

The Hebrew word olam means in the far distance. When looking off in the far distance it is difficult to make out any details and what is beyond that horizon cannot be seen. This concept is the olam. The word olam is also used for time for the distant past or the distant future as a time that is difficult to know or perceive.

This word is frequently translated as eternity or forever but in the English language it is misunderstood to mean a continual span of time that never ends. In the Hebrew mind it is simply what is at or beyond the horizon, a very distant time.

A common phrase in the Hebrew is "l'olam va'ed" and is usually translated as "forever and ever" but in the Hebrew it means "to the distant horizon and again" meaning "a very distant time and even further" and is used to express the idea of a very ancient or future time.

So olam mean "a very distant time" which is far enough away you can't see it. Jeff Brenner also talk about olam in the second half of the video below. *(it's only ~4 1/2 minutes)*

Olam means simply that it's concealed. It's "*at or beyond the horizon*". **By definition, the word olam means we can't know how long it lasts; we can only know it's "a very distant time".**

This makes a lot of sense if we look at a few of the place olam is used.

Exodus 12:24 *(referring to the Passover)*

24 "And you shall observe this event as an ordinance for you and your children **forever** (Olam).

and also

Exodus 28:43 *(referring to the priestly robes)*

43 "They shall be on Aaron and on his sons when they enter the tent of

meeting, or when they approach the altar to minister in the holy place, so that they do not incur guilt and die. **It shall be a statute forever (olam) to him and to his descendants after him.**

That's two place where God said something would be Olam, that clearly don't mean forever because they ended.

Further, I left out over a dozen verses where God says something that's part of the law will last "olam". If Olam means "forever" then we would still need to obey the Mosaic law. If you think we need to obey the Law, I suggest you read Galatians chapter 3.

Even more convincing are verses where Olam is applied to the past:

Joshua 24:2

24 Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'From **ancient** (olam) times your fathers lived beyond the River, namely, Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, and they served other gods.

Terah was a a long time ago from Joshua's perspective. However it certainly wasn't "forever" ago.

Another verse:

1 Samuel 27:8

8 Now David and his men went up and raided the Geshurites and the Girzites and the Amalekites; for they were the inhabitants of the land from **ancient** (olam) times, as you come to Shur even as far as the land of Egypt.

There are other places where olam is used of past events, but that should suffice for now. The point is olam does not mean forever. If it did, then how would you explain the Amalekites being inhabitants of the land from "forever". Olam literally means "a very distant time" (*either past or future*).

(It's worth noting that in the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures – the Septuagint – olam was most often translated as "aion".)

So if we return to Daniel...

Daniel 12:2

2 “Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to **everlasting** (*olam*) life, but the others to disgrace and **everlasting** (*olam*) contempt.

Olam means simply that it's concealed in duration. It's “*at or beyond the horizon*”. **By definition, the word olam means we can't know how long it lasts; we can only know it's “a very distant time”.**

In the context of those who get “olam life” truly, we can't know how long “forever” is. By definition, the meaning of forever defies all attempts to put an exact number of days/years on it. Thus, a “very distant time” where we can't know when it ends fits.

For those who get olam contempt, (*from the perspective of Universal Restoration*) we can't know how long it will take those in the lake of fire to repent for their wickedness; we only know it will be a long time.

Here's another verse some people say disproves Universal Restoration.

1 Samuel 3:13-14

14 “Therefore I have sworn to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be atoned for by sacrifice or offering **forever** (*olam*).”

If olam meant “forever” then perhaps this would be definitive proof that Universal Restoration is wrong and Eternal torment is right. However – as we've just seen – olam doesn't mean forever. The priestly robes and the Passover celebration were also described as lasting for “olam” and they ended with the cross. Perhaps this statement ended when the others did (*at the cross*).

(*The Jews believed that some sins were so grave, only the death of the one who committed them could atone for them. Yes, the Jews believed your sins could be forgiven after you die based on Isaiah 22:14, which we'll get to in a future article.*)

Likewise, past times were describe as olam, and they certainly weren't an “eternity” ago.

Olam simply means “at or beyond the horizon” which is “a very distant time”.

You can even use this word to describe “forever” (*sort of*) because it's a very long time with no end in sight. (*like the horizon*) But saying it **must** mean forever has no linguistic support or scriptural basis.

The Greek Word For Forever: Aidios

The Greek word that means “forever” or “eternal” is the word “??????” ([aidios](#)). Both the short and long definitions are “*eternal, everlasting*“. The Bible only uses it twice, so I’ll copy/paste both verses below.

Romans 1:20

20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His **eternal** (*aidios*) power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.

Jude 1:6

6 And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in **eternal** (*aidios*) bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day,

There is no dispute of any kind what this word means. Everyone agrees it means eternal. The reason this is useful is how *aion* and *aidios* are contrasted outside the Bible.

Aidios & Aion Outside The Bible

More uses of both *aion* and *aidios* occur outside the Bible in classic Greek literature.

While it’s not a common word, *aidios* always used to denote the idea of Eternity or forever. In fact, Aristotle uses both *aidios* and *aion* in the same sentence, which is very interesting. Obviously we don’t care what Aristotle says about God, but his use of words tells us something about what they mean.

Aristotle wrote about “*An eternal age pertaining to God*.”. Now to add the Greek words so you can see his use...

An **eternal** (*Aidios*) **age** (*Aion*) pertaining to God.

Aristotle uses similar language elsewhere. In *de Cælo*, Aristotle writes:

“The entire heaven is one and **eternal** (*Aidios*) having neither beginning nor end of an entire **age**

(Aion)

Obviously we aren't looking to Aristotle for doctrine. But notice his use of aion and aidios. Aidios is clearly eternal, and while aion is clearly temporary.

Aion/aionios appears quite often in classic Greek literature. Homer used aion 13 times in the Illiad and the Odyssey, but never in the sense of forever or eternal. It's often used to describe a man's time (*or lifespan = age*) on earth. These uses of aion are consistent with their use in the Bible. Nowhere does aion appear to mean forever, as in a "time without end". However, aidios means exactly that.

If God wanted to say "eternal punishment", why didn't He?

The words in Greek certainly exist, He just didn't use them.

Conclusion

I hope you see that the word aion does not mean eternal/forever. The opinions of five respected Greek Lexicons, it's usage in the Bible, plus its usage outside the Bible all bear this out.

Even if aion could sometimes mean forever/eternal, that poses no problem for the Universal Restoration position. It's obvious from it's usage that it doesn't have to mean eternal. (*for instance, Jesus talking about the "end of the aion"*) There are many places the Universal Restoration people go to to prove their position.

However, the Eternal Torment (hell) position requires aion to always mean forever or eternal.

As I said before, the entire existence of Eternal Torment rests on only two pillars. One of them is aion meaning eternal. If aion doesn't always mean eternal – every single time – then Eternal Torment rests on a very shaky foundation indeed.

The next article in this series is: [Can you be saved after you die?](#)