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Volume XVIII
Issue 426

This Present Evil Age

by — James Flanders

I know that this doesn't sound very pleasant, and, honestly, there are many other topics that I would enjoy more. However, I've realized just how important this topic is and that when we spend time looking at what Scripture has to say about it, the result is having our eyes opened to important truth. This is truth which can actually bring peace and help us to rest in hope, even as we look around and see so many evil things in the world.

I want to discuss some specific periods of time referred to in Scripture – something referred to as the ages or the eons. *Young's Literal Translation* uses the word “age.” *The Concordant Literal* uses the word “eon.” Most other English translations seem to jumble it all up as they take one specific word in the original language and translate it as everything from an “age,” to “forever,” and even as “world.”

Let me ask you something: How can the same word refer to an age (something with a definite beginning and end) and also refer to something unending (which is how the word “forever” is typically understood)? That can't be.

On a little side note, while I'm thinking about it: In our culture today the word “forever” is very often used to refer to something with a beginning and an end. Let me give you an example.

“Driving across Texas on Interstate 10 takes forever!”

Does that statement mean that driving across Texas is something without end? Nope – although, if you've ever driven across Texas it feels like it will never end – but using the word “forever” in that sense means that it takes a long time; it might not be pleasant, but the journey *will* come to an end.

That usage of the word “forever” actually lines up with the original word which is *aiōn*.

The only two translations I've found that seem consistent with this use of the word, again, are *Young's Literal Translation* and the *Concordant Literal Translation*.

Now, how does this word *aiōn* tie in with the topic of evil? Well, to start that journey, if you have a Bible handy flip it open to Galatians chapter 1.

First of all, I want to read from the *King James Version*.

Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, Who raised Him from the dead;) and all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia: grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, Who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father: to Whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen (Galatians 1:1-5).

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- the affirmation of God's purpose to save all mankind through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11);
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began" (Romans 16:25);
- true freedom and liberty apart from law (Galatians 5:1);
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AGE (continued from front page)

In :4 as it's worded in the *King James Version*, Paul is speaking of our Lord Jesus Christ, "Who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father."

The Greek word *aiōn* translated as "world" here in the *King James Version* is translated as "forever" in other places in the *King James Version*.

In fact, in :5 it says, "To Whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen" In the Greek, the word *aiōn* is used twice, *aiōn aiōn*, and translated as "forever and ever."

So in the span of two verses we see the word *aiōn* translated as two very different things in the *King James Version*: "world" and "forever." Over and over the *King James Version* does this to the word *aiōn*, which makes no sense.

Now, please hang in there with me. I know this is probably sounding a bit like a college lecture, but it's important stuff.

Let me ask you something. If *aiōn* means "forever," as in never ending or going on without end, why would the Spirit of God have inspired Paul in this passage and John in his writings to say forever and then add another forever to it? What does forever AND ever mean? How can you add forever to forever?

Think about it. If the word *aiōn* means without end going on non-stop, how can you add anything to that? You can't. It's like trying to add infinity to infinity.

On the other hand, if it is speaking of an age and an age, it would make sense. A period of time with a beginning and an end added to another period of time with a beginning and an end.

Now, as :5 speaks of God our Father receiving glory in an *aiōn* and an *aiōn*, please consider that it is saying that, even in what Paul was referring to as an *evil aiōn*, God is still **God**, Who is worthy of

glory and honor and ultimately the One in control, even in this present *evil aiōn* and the *aiōn* to come after it. God is still God in whatever comes at the end of the *aiōns*, at the end of a certain set of ages, or eras, or measurements of time.

Later I'll show you Scripture where Paul speaks of the end of the *aiōns*. Think about that, if *aiōn* means forever with absolutely no end, how in the world could there be an end of the *aiōns*? There couldn't. However, Scripture speaks clearly of the end of the *aiōns* which, in itself, to me, proves that the word *aiōn* cannot mean "without end" or "forever" in the traditional sense.

Are you with me? I know I'm giving you a lot to chew on.

Now back to Galatians 1:4-5. I want to read these verses from the literal translations – not from a translation that I'm convinced was designed to support religious dogma that diminishes the work of Christ Jesus and which was designed to keep people bound in ignorance and fear. After all, if a religious machine can keep people in fear ... that same religious machine can control them and profit from them.

Here's how Galatians 1:4-5 read in *Young's Literal Translation*:

Who did give Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us out of the present evil age, according to the will of God even our Father, to Whom [is] the glory to the ages of the ages. Amen.

Did you hear the difference between *Young's* and *King James*? The *King James* speaks of "this present evil world" then translates the same word as "forever and ever."

Young's is consistent in that the word *aiōn* is translated as age, as in "this present evil age." Then rather than changing *aiōn* to "forever" in :5, it's worded "to whom is the glory to the ages of the ages."

Here are those same verses in the *Concordant* ►



Literal New Testament. Speaking of Christ Jesus it says,

Who gives Himself for our sins, so that He might extricate us out of the present wicked eon, according to the will of our God and Father, to Whom be glory for the eons of the eons. Amen!

Verse 4 speaks of this “present wicked eon,” and :5 speaks of God receiving “glory for the eons of the eons.”

So the *Concordant* went with the literal English equivalent in both verses.

It’s called the “present evil eon,” or, the “present wicked eon.” Is that a good description of the age we live in?

Look back at the history of humanity. Read the newspaper. Evil and wicked are great descriptions of this period of time in which we are living.

Paul the Apostle tells us in Romans 12 that, as we live in this eon, we are not to be overcome with evil, but to overcome evil with good. In other words, our response to the evil we see and experience in this age is not to be dishing out more evil.

Instead, it’s to love your enemies, bless those who persecute you, pray for your enemies, etc. That’s what you and I, as believers, as the body of Christ, are called to do.

However, even as we do that, have you noticed that the best efforts of man in this age do very little to change things in the long term? We see change, we see good things; however, the world in this age is not getting better. In fact, we are living in a time where our technology has taken us to the place where, in the name of peace, governments have developed chemical and biological weapons that are absolutely hideous, and the United States has done their part in developing these things. Not to mention the nuclear capabilities which have the potential to wipe out practically all living creatures on the planet.

It’s an evil age.

However, it is just that: an *age*. It is an *eon*. It is an *aiōn*, a period of time with a beginning and an end. In other words, this present evil age will *not* go on forever. It will end, and the next *aiōn* will begin.

Does that mean that we are going to fix all of the evil in the world, eradicating it through our own

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human efforts and bringing in the next *aiōn*? When Christ returns it will not be to give the governments of the world a "high-five" for removing evil from the world.

Through our own effort we cannot change the world. Changing the world is a noble goal, but we aren't going to do it. As we live in this age, we have instructions for responding to it. We aren't to return evil for evil. We are to respond with good. That's our assignment.

Do we always get it right? Nope. Even those of us who would say, "I have the best of intentions. All I want is to do good. My heart's desire is to love God and love my neighbor with all my heart and only bring joy, blessings and goodness into the lives of others."

That may be your heart's desire. I know it is mine. Yet, the sad truth is that, as we live in what Paul describes as mortal and corruptible bodies, we will fall short; we will make mistakes; we will miss the mark; we will sin even though with all our hearts we don't want to.

Would you like to hear a passage referring to you and me and all of creation in this age? When you first hear it, it might make you mad. It might rub you the wrong way. It might drive you to your knees and deeper into the Scripture, which would be a good thing. Eventually, though, when you grasp the truth it contains, it will change your view of things and help you to have a different

perspective that will bring you hope, relieve you of some pressure, and stir up within you a desire for what is to eventually come.

Here it is: Romans 8:20. Read the entire chapter in context to get the flow of things.

In a nutshell, Paul is talking about the sufferings that we face in this evil eon and that they aren't worth comparing to the glory that will one day be revealed. In other words the suffering is a back-drop for a glorious contrast.

Paul then talks about how all of creation is eagerly waiting. Why? Because of what we read in :20.

For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him Who subjected it in hope.

The creation was subjected to *futility*, not willingly. In other words, it was not by our own choice. We were born into a world that, by design, was going to place us in futility. We have been subjected to futility.

We try to eradicate disease, more diseases develop. We try to fix those things with pharmaceuticals, those pharmaceuticals create more side effects. We try to get rid of world hunger, and never make progress. We eat right and exercise, trying to make wise decisions for the sake of good health, but we still grow old, get sick, break down and die!



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World governments work for peace. What is the means of that peace? War and killing.

My friend, I could go on and on talking about futility.

Listen to the verse again.

For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him Who subjected it in hope.

We were subjected to futility, not by our own choice, but because of *Him*. Who is “Him?” “Him” is *God!*

How’s that for hard truth? God subjected creation to futility? Why? Is it because He is mean? Is it because He hates us? Nope, it’s contrast. This eon is not all there is. There is more to come. God subjected us to futility ... in *hope!*

In the next two verses Paul tells us,

Creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.

One more thing before we wrap up.

It has to do with the *King James Version* and its major inconsistencies with the word *aiōn*.

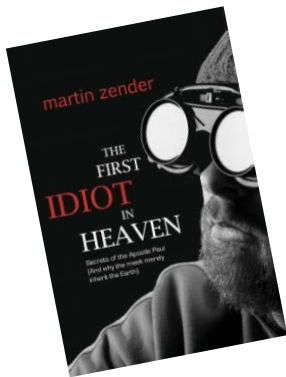
They translated it as “forever” when it fit their religious dogma, but in other places, they did translate it as an “age.” One instance that is very important is in Matthew chapter 24, where the disciples asked Jesus,

Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?

Wow, they were asking about the *end* of a particular *aiōn*. They were asking about the end of the *aiōn*, the end of the age, the end of the eon – NOT the end of “forever.”

That’s just a great verse that, to me, proves that the word *aiōn* means a period of time with an end.

Aren’t you glad that we don’t live in this present evil “forever”? Thank God that it is just for an age, just for an eon. ■



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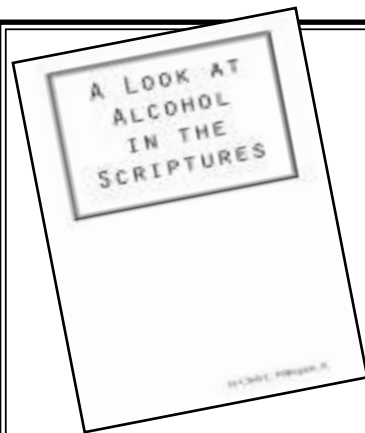


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A Look at Alcohol in the Scriptures

by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

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