

How long does “for ever” last?

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This Bible study is an edited excerpt from my (much longer) Bible study titled, *“What the Bible really says about heaven, hell, judgement, death, evil, sin, and salvation,”* and I’d highly recommend reading that one all the way through from beginning to end in order to understand why the doctrine of never-ending punishment is completely unscriptural, and why believing it can actually keep one from joining the body of Christ. However, in order to have something shorter to point people to when they insist that the Bible does teach never-ending punishment for unbelievers, because of all the passages that talk about “eternal damnation” and such, I’m adding this to my list of articles as well.

The simple truth is, it should be quite obvious to anyone who has actually read the whole Bible that the words “everlasting” and “eternal” (not to mention “for ever”) almost never (if ever) actually mean “never ending” (or “without end”) when you read them in less literal translations of Scripture such as the KJV, any more than they do when they’re used in everyday speech today, but almost always have to be read figuratively in such Bible versions, just as these English words are almost always still used by us today: as hyperbole, meaning they’re exaggerated expressions used for the sake of emphasis. For example, if I were to say, “That meeting lasted for ever,” would you assume I was still in the meeting and that it would, in fact, never actually end? Although, if you aren’t sure about this, please ponder it for the amount of time it takes an Everlasting Gobstopper to dissolve in your mouth, perhaps while watching a video of one of the various “eternal flames” people have lit being extinguished — the jawbreaker candy might take “for ever” to be completely consumed, perhaps even longer than that video lasts, but like most things which are said to be “everlasting” or “eternal,” its time will eventually come to an end as well.

This isn’t to say it’s impossible that these words are meant to be interpreted quantitatively rather than qualitatively in certain passages where they’re used in

the KJV and other less literal Bible translations, of course (and I'm certainly not insisting that they couldn't possibly have ever had a quantitative meaning when they were used outside of Scripture back in Bible times either), but one has to consider each instance of these words extremely carefully when reading Scripture, looking at the context of the passage, as well as of Scripture as a whole, before deciding they are meant to be interpreted quantitatively in a specific passage, so as not to contradict the rest of Scripture (since, if Scripture contradicted itself, there would be no reason to even consider what the Bible has to say about this topic in the first place, and nearly anyone who did so would likely be wasting their time). I'm not going to get too deep into this here, but when one does look into Scripture in its original languages, it becomes evident that "for ever" in the KJV has to generally be a figurative term meaning "for the age" (referring to the impending age that will last for 1,000 years when the Israel of God rules the planet after Jesus returns) or "for the ages" (referring to the final two — and greatest — ages, including both the 1,000-year age when the Israel of God will rule the world, as well as the final age on the New Earth, prior to the end of the ages), and that "everlasting" and "eternal" in the KJV also have to both generally be figurative terms which mean "pertaining to an age or ages" or "taking place during an age or ages" (referring again to one or both of the two aforementioned future ages, depending on the context), although these three terms can also sometimes simply figuratively refer to an indefinite period of time in the present evil age we currently live in,¹ but with a definite beginning and end (similarly, looking at the Greek makes it clear that the word "never" in the KJV also has to often be a figurative translation, generally just meaning "not for the age," telling us that, whatever the passage in question is referring to, it won't happen during the impending 1,000-year age).

¹ 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 1:3-5

However, for those who are looking for even more proof of this than what Paul wrote (although what I covered about Paul's teachings regarding the eventual salvation of all humanity in that other Bible study should be enough, in and of itself, so please go read it if you haven't already), all we have to do is look to the Hebrew Scriptures (meaning the books of the Bible that are generally referred to as "the Old Testament"), which make it very clear that nearly everything referred to by these words in the less literal English Bible versions using them does eventually come to an end.

For example, in Exodus 21:6 we read about servants who choose to remain in servitude rather than going free on the seventh year, as was their right: "*Then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an aul; and he shall serve him for ever.*" If we interpret "for ever" as literally referring to a period of time that never ends, it would either mean that the servant (or slave) in question can never die, or that the servant will have to remain in bondage to his master without end, even after both of their physical resurrections and judgements at the Great White Throne in the distant future (as well as in any afterlife, if one actually existed, in the meantime, even if they both ended up in different places while dead, although we now know from what we've covered that there is no conscious afterlife, but for those who believe there is one, this point would still apply). Since I doubt anyone believes either of these options to be the case, I trust everyone would agree that the "for ever" in this verse is actually a hyperbolic translation which really means "for a specific time period, even if the end date (the time of the servant's death) is currently unknown," which demonstrates that when we see the phrase "for ever" in the Bible, we can't just automatically assume it means "without end."

Of course, some Bible versions do say things like “for life,” or “permanently,” rather than “for ever” in this verse, but at the very least, you have to admit that עולם/“o-lawm” (which is the Hebrew word that “for ever” is translated from in this verse in the KJV) doesn’t literally mean “without end” or “never ending” (or at least doesn’t necessarily always mean “without end” or “never ending”), and this tells us that just because we see “for ever” in an English translation of the Hebrew Scriptures (or even “everlasting,” for that matter, which is also translated from the same Hebrew word), it doesn’t mean we should automatically assume *it* means “without end” or “never ending” either, which is really all I’m getting at here.

However, I have had people insist that, even if the word עולם doesn’t necessarily mean “never ending” in an ontological sense, the word should still always be understood as meaning something along the lines of: “it’s going to be like this for as long as the thing or person in question exists.” Aside from the problems this would cause that we’ve already discussed about the servant remaining enslaved even after his death and resurrection (unless you believe the servant never exists again after his death, and there’s nothing in the text which indicates that עולם should only apply to his first life on earth if you’re going to read it this way), this assertion also ignores the fact that עולם was translated other ways which contradict this conclusion as well, such as when it was rendered as “of old” in Deuteronomy 32:7,² and to insist that the word absolutely *has* to be rendered in a more “perpetual” manner would also mean that verse would have needed to be translated as saying something along the lines of “remember the days that never ended,” or “remember the days that we’re still experiencing,” instead.

² Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations: ask thy father, and he will shew thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee. — Deuteronomy 32:7

But is there any basis for my assertion that the word עולם doesn't necessarily mean "without end" anywhere else in the Bible, or are those the only examples? In fact, that this word doesn't necessarily mean "never ending" when it's used in the Bible can be seen in *many* places throughout the Hebrew Scriptures. For example, Isaiah 32:14–15 says: "*Because the palaces shall be forsaken; the multitude of the city shall be left; the forts and towers shall be for dens for ever, a joy of wild asses, a pasture of flocks; Until the spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest.*" Unless we're meant to believe that Jerusalem will be left forsaken and desolate and never recover or be inhabited again, as verse 14 seems to say, we have to interpret that "for ever" as meaning a specific period of time again, just as we had to do with the previous example. And, indeed, verse 15 tells us when that "for ever" ends, stating that Jerusalem will be left deserted "for ever," *until* the spirit be poured from on high.

And those weren't the only passages to demonstrate that it doesn't mean "never ending." We also read about the fact that the Levitical priesthood will be "everlasting" in Exodus 40:15³ (with "everlasting" also being translated from עולם there), yet we know from Hebrews 7:14–22 that the priesthood of Aaron's descendants is to be replaced by Jesus Christ, who will be "*a priest for ever after*

³ And thou shalt anoint them, as thou didst anoint their father, that they may minister unto me in the priest's office: for their anointing shall surely be an everlasting priesthood throughout their generations. — Exodus 40:15

the order of Melchisedec,”⁴ and we know from 1 Corinthians 15 that even this new priesthood which is figuratively said to last “for ever” is eventually no longer going to be necessary either (since you don’t need any priest once there’s no sin or death remaining).⁵ That this “everlasting” priesthood will eventually come to an end is also backed up by the fact that, while the believing descendants of Isaac and Jacob will reign over the people of the earth as “kings and priests” during the thousand-year period of time when the kingdom of heaven finally fully exists on earth,⁶ there almost certainly won’t be any Israelite priests on the New Earth at all, because there won’t be any need for them with no physical temple in the New Jerusalem⁷ (and there definitely won’t be a need for them after the ages end and death has been destroyed, since everyone will have been quickened — which means to be made immortal, as happened to Jesus after He was resurrected⁸ — at that point, and so a priesthood will no longer be necessary).

⁴ For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood. And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest, Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life. For he testifieth, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec. For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof. For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God. And inasmuch as not without an oath he was made priest: (For those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath by him that said unto him, The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec:) By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament. — Hebrews 7:14–22

⁵ And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all. — 1 Corinthians 15:28

⁶ And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth. — Revelation 5:10

⁷ And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. — Revelation 21:22

⁸ For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: — 1 Peter 3:18

Similarly, in Isaiah 24:5 we read, *“The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant.”* This seems to tell us that the Old Covenant (also known as the Mosaic covenant, which is the only covenant that can be broken by humans — specifically by Israelites, since the Gentiles weren’t under the Mosaic law or connected with the covenants God made with Israel⁹ — because all the other covenants of God are unconditional) can never come to an end and be replaced by a New Covenant because it’s said to be “everlasting,” but we know from other parts of Scripture that there *will* be a New Covenant for those in the house of Israel and the house of Judah,¹⁰ and that their Old Covenant in fact began to decay¹¹ when Christ died¹² (and will indeed eventually vanish away entirely, if it hasn’t already). So we can see that “everlasting” doesn’t necessarily mean “never ending” or “without end” when we read that word in the Bible any more than “for ever” does.

⁹ That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: — Ephesians 2:12

¹⁰ Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. — Jeremiah 31:31-34

¹¹ In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away. — Hebrews 8:13

¹² And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth. — Hebrews 9:15-17

And it's not just the Old Covenant that's referred to as an "everlasting covenant" in the KJV. The Abrahamic covenant is too, in 1 Chronicles 16:16-18.¹³ But since we know that the land of Canaan (now known as the land of Israel), which is what the promise in this covenant is about, will eventually cease to exist when the earth is replaced by the New Earth, the "everlasting" period of time that this covenant will last will also expire when our current planet does (which has to happen, since if our current universe isn't replaced by a New Heaven and a New Earth, our current earth would get pretty dark at the time of the heat death of the universe, presuming it isn't first engulfed by the sun when our star goes Red Giant, of course, as is believed to be likely to happen in a few billion years, give or take).

The translators of the KJV also demonstrated quite clearly that they didn't believe עולם always means "without end" in Ecclesiastes 12:5,¹⁴ where they used the word עולם to say "his long home" when referring to the time someone who is dead spends in the grave. Since we know that everyone who dies will eventually be resurrected to face judgement (or enjoy salvation) one day, nobody could ever be resurrected from the dead if עולם meant "never ending." (Interestingly, though, some Bible versions actually *do* translate the verse to say "eternal home," telling us that the word "eternal" can be just as figurative in those versions as it is in the KJV, unless we're to believe there's no resurrection of the dead.)

¹³ Even of the covenant which he made with Abraham, and of his oath unto Isaac; And hath confirmed the same to Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant, Saying, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance; — 1 Chronicles 16:16-18

¹⁴ Also when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way, and the almond tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail: because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets: — Ecclesiastes 12:5

Now, I could go on and on with example¹⁵ after example¹⁶ of things that were said to be “for ever”¹⁷ or “everlasting” that eventually ended in the Bible, but I trust it’s obvious by now that the translators believed those who read the KJV are able to understand figurative language, and that they never intended for anyone to simply assume the terms “for ever” or “everlasting” should definitely be interpreted as meaning “never ending” or “without end” when translated from the Hebrew Scriptures, with “for ever” generally just being figurative language that refers to “an age,” or to “a seemingly long period of time with a definite beginning and end,” and “everlasting” generally just meaning “age-pertaining” (“pertaining to an age or ages,” in other words), age-during (“taking place during an age or ages,” in other words), or even just “long lasting,” with nearly everything that’s said to be “everlasting” or said to last “for ever” eventually coming to an end. These words are quite clearly being used as hyperbole in most parts of these books in the KJV and other less literal Bible translations, and are not meant to be taken literally at all (and if you look עולם up in a concordance, you can see many more examples for yourself proving that this Hebrew word doesn’t necessarily mean “never ending” or “without end,” and that “for ever” and “everlasting” don’t either).

And with all that in mind, if “for ever” and “everlasting” don’t necessarily mean “without end” or “never ending” in the parts of the Bible translated from the Hebrew Scriptures, it stands to reason that there’s a good chance they don’t necessarily mean that in the parts of the Bible translated from the Greek

¹⁵ I have surely built thee an house to dwell in, a settled place for thee to abide in for ever. — 1 Kings 8:13

¹⁶ Behold, I build an house to the name of the Lord my God, to dedicate it to him, and to burn before him sweet incense, and for the continual shewbread, and for the burnt offerings morning and evening, on the sabbaths, and on the new moons, and on the solemn feasts of the Lord our God. This is an ordinance for ever to Israel. — 2 Chronicles 2:4

¹⁷ The leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed for ever. And he went out from his presence a leper as white as snow. — 2 Kings 5:27

Scriptures either (meaning the books of the Bible that are generally referred to as “the New Testament”). Outside of the clear proof from Paul’s epistles I’ve provided in that other Bible study that they don’t, based on what he wrote about everyone being “made alive” (at least it should be clear proof for those who are using systematic theology to interpret Scripture and aren’t ignoring everything we’ve already covered), this is also made obvious by the fact that עוֹלָם is translated as αἰωνίων/“ahee-o’-nee-ohn” in the parts of the LXX (also known as the Septuagint, which is the earliest still-existing Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures) where it’s translated figuratively as “everlasting” in the KJV, and since αἰωνίων is often translated as “everlasting” or “eternal” in the books of the less literal Bible versions translated from the Greek Scriptures (although it’s not always translated that way either, even in the KJV, also making it clear that αἰωνίων can mean things other than “never ending,” which is why it’s sometimes also transliterated as “eonian” — which literally means “pertaining to an eon/age or eons/ages” — depending on your Bible version), one would think this means that we shouldn’t just automatically assume the words “everlasting” and “eternal” were definitely meant to be interpreted literally in the English translations of these books either (especially since, if עוֹלָם often *doesn’t* mean “never ending,” it makes no sense to then say that its Greek translation as αἰωνίων can *only* mean “never ending,” as some insist, when we already know from the LXX that it *rarely* means that anyway), and that neither should “never” or “for ever,” both of which are also translated from cognates of αἰωνίων: such as αἰών/“ahee-ohn’,” which literally means a singular “age”, or long period of time with a definite beginning and end (which is why it’s sometimes transliterated as “eon,” depending on your Bible version), and αἰῶνας/“ahee-ohn’-as,” which literally means plural “ages,” or multiple periods of time, each with a definite beginning and end, based on the definition of the word “age” (which is why this word is sometimes transliterated as “eons,” depending on

your Bible version), and which are both translated as “age” and “ages”¹⁸ in different parts of less literal English translations as well — although the KJV tends to use “world” in places that mean “age,”¹⁹ but various other less literal translations use “age” instead of “world” in those same verses—telling us that these words definitely don’t only mean “can’t ever” or “without end.”

In fact, unless we want to believe there are three eternities, including a “past eternity” (we can see from the way the KJV translators rendered 1 Corinthians 2:7 to say “*before the world*”²⁰ instead of “before for ever” or “before eternity” that they knew better than to always translate the word αἰών in a manner that denotes a period of time which never ends), as well as a “present eternity” and a “future eternity” (which the KJV translators rendered as “*neither in this world, neither in the world to come*”²¹ rather than “neither in this for ever or in the for ever to come” or “neither in this eternity or in the eternity to come” in Matthew 12:32), we can see that the word αἰών simply doesn’t necessarily mean “without end,” just as the KJV’s rendering of αἰωνίων as “*before the world began*” in 2 Timothy 1:9²² instead of “before eternity began,” and as “*since the world began*” in Romans 16:25²³ instead of “since eternity began,” proves that αἰωνίον

¹⁸ Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: — Colossians 1:26

¹⁹ But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: — Luke 20:35

²⁰ But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: — 1 Corinthians 2:7

²¹ And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come. — Matthew 12:32

²² Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, — 2 Timothy 1:9

²³ Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, — Romans 16:25

doesn't necessarily mean "never ending" either (in fact, I'm not aware of a single version of the Bible that renders it as "eternity" in this verse). So if anyone ever tries to claim that αἰώνιον can *only* mean "never ending" or some other word or phrase that denotes an endless period of time, and that it can't possibly refer to something more temporary, simply show them the passages I just referred to, which is all the proof one needs that this isn't the case at all.

This all goes for when the word αἰών is translated in a sentence to say "never" as well, as already mentioned. This can be demonstrated by the way John 11:25-26 is rendered in the KJV: *"Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?"* We know this *can't* be a literal translation, because people who believed in Jesus at the time He made that statement *did* eventually die physically (and still do today). So unless we're to believe that Paul actually *wasn't* revealing a mystery (meaning revealing a secret which hadn't been disclosed before he did so) in 1 Corinthians 15:51 when he wrote, *"Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,"* we have to interpret the word "never" figuratively in the KJV in that passage in John, since Paul was the *first* to reveal the secret that some people will never die prior to being made immortal. And Jesus couldn't have been referring to the supposed "spiritual death" that most Christians believe in, because "never" literally means "not even one time," yet Christians believe we already "died spiritually" at least once, at the time of our first sin, so it couldn't refer to that concept even if there was such a thing as "spiritual death," at least not without adding the word "again" to the sentence (and that word is definitely not there in the original Greek, any more than it's there in the KJV). So unless Paul was lying about this being a mystery, or secret, at the time he wrote about it, the passage in John *has* to be a figurative translation of the Greek, simply meaning, "And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall not be

dying for the age,” telling us that believers (at least believers saved under the Gospel of the Kingdom, since this was stated by Jesus during His earthly ministry) won’t die during the 1,000-year age they’ll enjoy in the kingdom of heaven when it begins on the earth (the reason we know it’s only referring to that one particular age rather than referring to multiple ages is because it’s translated from an Accusative Singular variation of αἰών rather than from a plural variation of the word).

And even in passages where it might seem to make sense to interpret the terms literally on first glance, such as Romans 16:26 for example²⁴ (which uses the phrase “*the everlasting God*” in the KJV), this still isn’t necessarily the case. Some would insist that to interpret it figuratively would mean that God will eventually die, but this verse isn’t actually trying to tell us that God’s life will never end in the first place. The fact of the matter is, we already know that God isn’t going to die based on earlier Scripture, such as Psalm 102:27, which told us long ago that His “*years shall have no end*,”²⁵ so that’s not something Paul needed to explain to his readers. Instead, if we interpret the word “everlasting” consistently with its other instances in the KJV (meaning we interpret it as figuratively referring to a long period of time, or even as pertaining to the ages), we can see that Paul is simply telling us that God is the age-pertaining God, meaning He doesn’t just sit on high, removed from our struggles in time, but rather that He cares about — and is even intimately involved in — what happens during the ages. And those who might think this limits Him to the ages aren’t thinking things through carefully enough, since otherwise God being said to be

²⁴ But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith: — Romans 16:26

²⁵ But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end. — Psalm 102:27

the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob²⁶ would limit Him to being the God of those three men, and those three men alone, as well. And the same goes for passages such as Galatians 1:3-5²⁷ and Philippians 4:20,²⁸ where a more consistent interpretation of the passages as figuratively saying “to our God and Father be glory for the ages of the ages” wouldn’t mean they’re telling us that God’s glory will end when the ages do, any more than the figurative interpretation of Romans 16:26 means that God’s life would end at that time; it just means that Paul was simply focusing on the glory God will finally receive — which He certainly isn’t receiving now, at least not to the extent He will at that time — when the two greatest ages finally begin (which, as those who are familiar with the Doctrine of the Ages — sometimes also referred to as the Doctrine of the Eons — know, is referring to the thousand-year age when the kingdom of heaven exists in Israel, as well as to the final age on the New Earth, but I don’t have the space to get into the details of that topic here so I’m going to leave it up to you to dig deeper into that subject if you’re at all curious to learn more). Simply put, with very few exceptions, the Bible doesn’t delve into

²⁶ Then came to him certain of the Sadducees, which deny that there is any resurrection; and they asked him, Saying, Master, Moses wrote unto us, If any man's brother die, having a wife, and he die without children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. There were therefore seven brethren: and the first took a wife, and died without children. And the second took her to wife, and he died childless. And the third took her; and in like manner the seven also: and they left no children, and died. Last of all the woman died also. Therefore in the resurrection whose wife of them is she? for seven had her to wife. And Jesus answering said unto them, The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage: But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection. Now that the dead are raised, even Moses shewed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living; for all live unto him. — Luke 20:27-38

²⁷ 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 1:3-5

²⁸ Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen. — Philippians 4:20

details pertaining to eternity, but is instead focused almost entirely on details pertaining to the ages (even though this fact might be less obvious to people who only read less literal translations of Scripture). What occurs after the end of the ages isn't something that God seems to want us to know about right now (other than to know that everyone will have been quickened/saved by that time), and He appears to want us to concern ourselves with what happens *during* the ages instead.

But even if we did interpret “everlasting” and “for ever and ever” in those particular passages literally, the fact remains that, if we're reading Bible versions which do use the words “for ever,” “everlasting,” and “eternal,” one has to be aware that “for ever” in those versions is very often just figurative language that refers to “an age” or “ages,” or to “a seemingly long period of time with a definite beginning and end,” and the same goes for not only “everlasting,” but also “eternal,” which is often used as a synonym for “everlasting” in the KJV and is almost always translated from the same Greek word — with the one exception,²⁹ where it's instead translated from ἀἰδιος/“ah-id'-ee-os,” not causing any problem for the doctrine of the salvation of all humanity at all. And so the bottom line is that we should always be considering the context of the passages these various words are being used in, as well as comparing these passages to the rest of Scripture, in order to determine whether these terms actually should be literally interpreted as meaning “without end” or “never ending” (not to mention “can't ever,” in the case of the word “never” being used) in those instances, or whether they should be interpreted figuratively instead, to make sure a literal interpretation of the English translation wouldn't contradict other parts of the Bible, in other words. And, just as the scriptural

²⁹ For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: — Romans 1:20

references to an “everlasting” Old Covenant can’t literally be talking about a never-ending covenant, because that would contradict the passages which talk about how it has to fade away and be replaced with by a New Covenant, scriptural references to “everlasting” judgements (or to punishments which last “for ever,” or even “for ever and ever”) can’t literally be talking about judgements and punishments which never end, because that would contradict the passages which talk about the salvation of all, as demonstrated in that other Bible study. (This, by the way, also means that, while we can be said to be given “eternal life” at the point we believe the Gospel and are saved, this can really only be said to be the case from a proleptic perspective, because the actual, physical experience of “eternal life” — referring to our quickening and being taken to the heavens, in the case of those of us in the body of Christ, and to getting to live in the kingdom of heaven during the thousand-year reign of Christ on earth, in the case of those in the Israel of God — can’t actually begin from a literal perspective until the final ages actually commence, since we now know that the phrase really means “age-pertaining life” when interpreted consistently with the rest of Scripture.) And even if one were to simply ignore everything I covered about the Hebrew and Greek words we just looked at, the facts about the figurative meaning of the words they’re translated into in the KJV should still be pretty obvious based on the passages I used to discuss them in their original languages.