

How Long Is Eternity?

by Wayne Goff

“Now behold, one came and said to Him, ‘Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?’” (Matthew 19:16)

“Eternal, Eternity”

The Greek word which is translated “*eternal*” or “*everlasting*” is *aiōnios* and *literally* means “without beginning,” or “without end,” or “without beginning or ending.” Man has always pondered this concept, and the Bible reveals that God alone is **absolutely eternal** – without beginning and without ending.

“Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, neither faints nor is weary. His understanding is unsearchable” (Isaiah 40:28)

So the idea here is not only the absence of meaningful time, but also the absence of weakness or lack of knowledge! God is eternal, all-powerful, and omniscient.

“Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God” (Psalm 90:2).

Once again, God is “*from everlasting to everlasting*” – that is, from before earth time to after earth time – He dwells where time has no meaning.

English Concept

“**Eternal**” in our English dictionary is defined as “lasting or existing forever; without end or beginning: *the secret of eternal youth | fear of eternal damnation.*” So the idea is the same, but the comprehension of it is almost impossible for us to comprehend because we **never** see eternal things in this life! But some have tried to explain it with analogies. Let me share one with you.

Eternity: if a sparrow could travel from the earth to the moon (238,900 miles) and carry one grain of sand in its mouth from the earth and deposit it on the moon, and return, then by the time that sparrow had transported every grain of sand to the moon from earth, eternity would have only just begun!

Mathematical Concept

In mathematics, there is the concept of “**infinity**.” *The whole idea* of infinity is that there is no such thing as counting “to” it. So far as counting goes, “infinity” is of inherent *unreachability* – not because of some limitation of resources, but because *there is no end!* In terms of counting, it means that *you are never done*. Let’s say that you decide to count to one million. Once you reach a million, are you done? No, there are numbers *past* a million, *past* a billion, *past* the highest number the human mind can conceive!

God used this concept with Abraham in Genesis 15:5 as He promised him innumerable descendants: “*Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.*” And He said to him, “*So shall your descendants be.*” Presumably there is an end to the number of stars, but no human being will ever know what that number is!

“Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude – innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore” (Hebrews 11:12).

Science tells us that there are about 10 billion galaxies in the observable universe, and assumes if each galaxy averaged 100 billion stars, then there would be about 1 billion trillion stars in the observable universe! But notice the limitations of human knowledge: “about,” “observable,” “assuming.” Man doesn’t know and cannot count the stars of the universe! But God can! “*He counts the number of the stars; He calls them all by name*” (Ps. 147:4).

What About You?

Considering *the real possibility* of winding up in either eternal life or eternal death, have you asked the question: “**What must I do to inherit eternal life?**” See John 5:28-29.

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