

A Closer Look at the Word 'World'

In our modern-day English language, we have many different synonyms for the word **“world”**. Some of these synonyms refer to the literal meaning of the word, such as: planet, Earth, globe, universe, and cosmos.

Other synonyms refer to a contextual meaning such as: society, secular interests, temporal concerns, and earthly interests.

In order to get the proper meaning intended for the word **“world”** as used in a sentence, one must consider the context surrounding the word.

In other words, the flow of the words and thoughts surrounding the word **“world”** will give us a clear understanding as to what aspect of the word is intended. We must apply this same principle when we read and study the Word of God.

Just as in the English language of today, the Koine Greek language, which is the language of the New Testament, we find many synonyms for the word **“world”**.

Just as in the English language, we can always arrive at an accurate meaning of this word by giving careful attention to the context in which it is used. We will begin this study by taking a brief look at three synonyms of the word **“world”** and how they are used in the Koine Greek.

KOSMOS – [G#2889](#)

The first Koine Greek word we will be looking at which is translated as the English word **“world”** is **“kosmos”**. When **“kosmos”** is used, it refers to the orderly arrangement of a system often referring to the whole world or the Universe.

We can derive the true meaning of **“kosmos”** from the context in which it is used. We derive our English word **“cosmos”** directly from this Greek word. One Scriptural example of the use of **“kosmos”** can be found in **Acts 17:24**.

Act 17:24 God^{G2316} that made^{G4160} the^{G3588} world^{G2889} and^{G2532} all things^{G3956} therein,^{G1722} ^{G846} seeing that he^{G3778} is^{G5225} Lord^{G2962} of heaven^{G3772} and^{G2532} earth,^{G1093} dwelleth^{G2730} not^{G3756} in^{G1722} temples^{G3485} made with hands;^{G5499}

One can easily tell from the context of the word “**world**” as it is used here refers to the Universe.

Another example is in **1 Corinthians 8:4**.

1Co 8:4 As concerning^{G4012} therefore^{G3767} the^{G3588} eating^{G1035} of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols,^{G1494} we know^{G1492} that^{G3754} an idol^{G1497} is nothing^{G3762} in^{G1722} the world,^{G2889} and^{G2532} that^{G3754} there is none^{G3762} other^{G2087}

In this verse, we see the word “**world**” refers to the whole world because He is God of the whole Universe.

Another example can be found in **John 21:25**.

Joh 21:25 And^{G1161} there are^{G2076} also^{G2532} many^{G4183} other things^{G243} which^{G3745} Jesus^{G2424} did,^{G4160} the which,^{G3748} if^{G1437} they should be written^{G1125} every one,^{G2596} I suppose^{G3633} that even the^{G3588} world^{G2889} itself^{G846} could not^{G3761} contain^{G5562} the^{G3588} books^{G975} that should be written.^{G1125} Amen.^{G281}

Here John boldly proclaims that the “**kosmos**” or “**world**” or “**Universe**” itself could not contain the books that could be written about all the acts of Jesus because He is God manifest in the flesh.

There are many more verses where the word “**kosmos**” is translated into the English word “**world**”. From these few examples cited we can get a feel for how the Greek word “**kosmos**” is used in the Bible.

G2889
 κόσμος
 kosmos
 kos'-mos
 Probably from the base of **G2865**; orderly *arrangement*, that is, *decoration*; by implication the *world* (in a wide or narrow sense, including its inhabitants, literally or figuratively [morally]): - adorning, world.

OIKOUMENE – **G#3625**

The second Greek word we will look at is “**oikoumene**”. This Greek word refers to the land, the world kingdoms, the whole inhabited earth. A verse that illustrates the usage of this Greek word is in Acts 17:6.

Act 17:6 And^{G1161} when they found^{G2147} them^{G846} not,^{G3361} they drew^{G4951} Jason^{G2394} and^{G2532} certain^{G5100} brethren^{G80} unto^{G1909} the^{G3588} rulers of the city,^{G4173} crying,^{G994} These^{G3778} that have turned the world upside down^{G387} ^{G3588} ^{G3625} are come^{G3918} hither^{G1759} also;^{G2532}

In this verse, his disciples were being accused of turning the “**world**” upside down with their doctrine.

This context here does not denote that they were turning the whole Universe upside down, but rather the Roman Empire that was the predominant Kingdom and power in their day.

Another clear example of the usage of “**oikoumene**” can be found in **Acts 24:5**.

Act 24:5 For^{G1063} we have found^{G2147} this^{G5126} man^{G435} a pestilent^{G3061} fellow, and^{G2532} a mover^{G2795} of sedition^{G4714} among all^{G3956} the^{G3588} Jews^{G2453} throughout^{G2596} the^{G3588} world,^{G3625} and^{G5037} a ringleader^{G4414} of the^{G3588} sect^{G139} of the^{G3588} Nazarenes:^{G3480}

Again, here the word “**world**” refers to the Roman Empire or their inhabited “**world**”. In **Romans 10:18**, we find the Gospel being heard “**unto the ends of the world**”. Truly they were going throughout the whole known and inhabited world of the Roman Empire with this Gospel message. From these examples, we can get an understanding what the Greek word “**oikoumene**” denotes.

Rom 10:18 But^{G235} I say,^{G3004} Have they not^{G3378} heard?^{G191} Yes verily,^{G3304} their^{G848} sound^{G5353} went^{G1831} into^{G1519} all^{G3956} the^{G3588} earth,^{G1093} and^{G2532} their^{G848} words^{G4487} unto^{G1519} the^{G3588} ends^{G4009} of the^{G3588} world.^{G3625}

G3625

οἰκουμένη

oikoumenē

oy-kou-men'-ay

Feminine participle present passive of **G3611** (as noun, by implication of **G1093**); **land**, that is, the (terrene part of the) **globe**; specifically the Roman **empire**: - earth, world.

AION – G#165

The third Greek word that we will be studying today is “**aion**”. This Greek word is very important because it is the word for “**world**” that is very often misinterpreted by modern preachers and Churches today.

Let us take a closer look at this word in the Greek in order to get a clearer understanding of its meaning. Simply put, the Greek word “**aion**” means “**age**”. “**Aion**” is used more than 40 times in the New Testament.

It NEVER means this physical planet or Universe.

As we already pointed out, the Greek language has other words to denote the physical planet we call Earth. Let's begin to take a closer look at just how this Greek word is used.

The New Testament writers often refer to their “**world**” as “**this age**”. We see an example of this in **Matthew 13:22**. In this parable, the cares of “**this age**” choked out the seed of the word. In **Galatians 1:4**, we read about the deliverance of Jesus from their present “**world**” or “**evil age**” in which they lived.

Mat 13:22 He also that received seed^{G4687 G1161} among^{G1519} the^{G3588} thorns^{G173 (G3778)} is^{G2076} he that heareth^{G191} the^{G3588} word;^{G3056} and^{G2532} the^{G3588} care^{G3308} of this^{G5127} world;^{G165} and^{G2532} the^{G3588} deceitfulness^{G539} of riches,^{G4149} choke^{G4846} the^{G3588} word;^{G3056} and^{G2532} he becometh^{G1096} unfruitful.^{G175}

Gal 1:4 Who gave^{G1325} himself^{G1438} for^{G5228} our^{G2257} sins,^{G266} that^{G3704} he might deliver^{G1807} us^{G2248} from^{G1537} this^{G1764} present^{G1764} evil^{G4190} world;^{G165} according^{G2596} to the^{G3588} will^{G2307} of God^{G2316} and^{G2532} our^{G2257} Father.^{G3962}

Paul admonishes Timothy about the riches and allurements of “the present world” “age” in which they lived. (**1 Timothy 6:17, 2 Timothy 4:10, Titus 2:12**)

1Ti 6:17 Charge^{G3853} them that are rich^{G4145} in^{G1722} this world;^{G3568 G165} that they be not highminded,^{G5309 G3361} nor^{G3366} trust^{G1679} in^{G1909} uncertain^{G83} riches,^{G4149} but^{G235} in^{G1722} the^{G3588} living^{G2198} God,^{G2316} who giveth^{G3930} us^{G2254} richly^{G4146} all things^{G3956} to^{G1519} enjoy;^{G619}

2Ti 4:10 For^{G1063} Demas^{G1214} hath forsaken^{G1459} me,^{G3165} having loved^{G25} this present^{G3568} world;^{G165} and^{G2532} is departed^{G4198} unto^{G1519} Thessalonica;^{G2332} Crescens^{G2913} to^{G1519} Galatia,^{G1053} Titus^{G5103} unto^{G1519} Dalmatia.^{G1149}

Tit 2:12 Teaching^{G3811} us^{G2248} that,^{G2443} denying^{G720} ungodliness^{G763} and^{G2532} worldly^{G2886} lusts,^{G1939} we should live^{G2198} soberly, righteously,^{G4996 (G1346)} and^{G2532} godly,^{G2153} in^{G1722} this present^{G3568} world;^{G165}

In all of these Scriptural examples, the Greek word “**aion**” refers to their present “world” or “**age**” in which they lived.

Jesus also taught about a future “**aion**” or “**age**” that was coming very soon. Another “**world**” or “**age**” was coming very shortly in their future in which eternal life would exist. (**Luke 20:35, 18:30, Mark 10:30**)

Luk 20:35 But^{G1161} they which shall be accounted worthy^{G2661} to obtain^{G5177} that^{G1565} world;^{G165} and^{G2532} the^{G3588} resurrection^{G386} from^{G1537} the dead,^{G3498} neither^{G3777} marry,^{G1060} nor^{G3777} are given in marriage;^{G1548}

Luk 18:30 Who^{G3739} shall not^{G3364} receive^{G618} manifold more^{G4179} in^{G1722} this^{G5129} present time,^{G2540} and^{G2532} in^{G1722} the^{G3588} world;^{G165} to come^{G2064} life^{G2222} everlasting.^{G166}

Mar 10:30 But^{G1437 G3361} he shall receive^{G2983} an hundredfold^{G1542} now^{G3568} in^{G1722} this^{G5129} time,^{G2540} houses,^{G3614} and^{G2532} brethren,^{G80} and^{G2532} sisters,^{G79} and^{G2532} mothers,^{G3384} and^{G2532} children,^{G5043} and^{G2532} lands,^{G68} with^{G3326} persecutions;^{G1375} and^{G2532} in^{G1722} the^{G3588} world;^{G165} to come^{G2064} eternal^{G166} life.^{G2222}

The New Testament writers also wrote often about the new “**age**” or “**world**” that was about to come. (**Ephesians 1:21, Hebrews 6:5**)

Eph 1:21 Far above^{G5231} all^{G3956} principality,^{G746} and^{G2532} power,^{G1849} and^{G2532} might,^{G1411} and^{G2532} dominion,^{G2963} and^{G2532} every^{G3956} name^{G3686} that is named,^{G3687} not^{G3756} only^{G3440} in^{G1722} this^{G5129} world,^{G165} but^{G235} also^{G2532} in^{G1722} that which is to come:^{G3195}

Heb 6:5 And^{G2532} have tasted^{G1089} the good^{G2570} word^{G4487} of God,^{G2316} and^{G5037} the powers^{G1411} of the world^{G165} to come,^{G3195}

The Apostle Paul even went so far as to say that the end of the “**world**” (“**aion**”) or “**age**” had come upon them in the first century. (**1 Corinthians 10:11**) He did **NOT** mean the end of the planet, but rather the end of an “**age**”. This is why the Greek word “**aion**” is used.

1Co 10:11 Now^{G1161} all^{G3956} these things^{G5023} happened^{G4819} unto them^{G1565} for ensamples:^{G5179} and^{G1161} they are written^{G1125} for^{G4314} our^{G2257} admonition,^{G3559} upon^{G1519} whom^{G3739} the^{G3588} ends^{G5056} of the^{G3588} world^{G165} are come.^{G2658}

Jesus said in **Matthew 13:39**, that the harvest will happen at the end of the “**world**” (“**aion**”) or the end of the “**age**”.

Mat 13:39 (G1161) The^{G3588} enemy^{G2190} that sowed^{G4687} them^{G846} is^{G2076} the^{G3588} devil;^{G1228} the^{G3588} harvest^{G2326} is^{G2076} the end^{G4930} of the^{G3588} world;^{G165} and^{G2532} the^{G3588} reapers^{G2327} are^{G1526} the angels.^{G32}

When the disciples asked Jesus, “... *what shall be the sign of thy coming and of the end of the world?*”, the word “**world**” here is translated from the Greek word “**aion**” or “**age**”. (**Matthew 24:3**)

Mat 24:3 And^{G1161} as he^{G846} sat^{G2521} upon^{G1909} the^{G3588} mount^{G3735} of Olives,^{G1636} the^{G3588} disciples^{G3101} came^{G4334} unto him^{G846} privately,^{G2596} saying,^{G3004} Tell^{G2036} us,^{G2254} when^{G4219} shall these things^{G5023} be?^{G2071} and^{G2532} what^{G5101} shall be the^{G3588} sign^{G4592} of thy^{G4674} coming,^{G3952} and^{G2532} of the^{G3588} end^{G4930} of the^{G3588} world?^{G165}

G165

αἰών

aion

ahee-ohn'

From the same as **G104**; properly an *age*; by extension *perpetuity* (also past); by implication the *world*; specifically (Jewish) a Messianic period (present or future): - age, course, eternal, (for) ever (-more), [n-]ever, (beginning of the, while the) world (began, without end). Compare **G5550**.

This context tells us clearly that they were asking Jesus what the signs of His coming would be and the end of their “**world**”, not the end of the planet Earth. Jesus goes on to give the complete list of all the end time events associated with the end of their “**Old Covenant world**”, or “**their Old Covenant age**”.

The writer of the Book of Hebrews sums it all up in **Hebrews 9:26**. In this verse, the first word **“world”** comes from the Greek word **“kosmos”** or the foundation of the orderly system of the Covenantal Law given at Mt Sinai.

The second word **“world”** is translated from the Greek word **“aion”** or **“age”**. Jesus put away sin once and for all at Calvary at the **“end of the world”** or **“age”**.

This verse is telling us that Jesus died on the cross at **the “end of the world”** or **“age”**. Notice that the physical world did not end when Jesus died at Calvary, but the Old Covenant World was getting ready to vanish away. (**Hebrews 8:13**) This is why the Greek word **“aion”** is used in **Hebrews 9:26**.

Conclusion

Understanding all of the different usages of the word **“world”** in their proper context is truly a **“game changer”**. Many preachers today teach and preach the end of the world is coming so soon and Jesus is about to return.

They take these very same scriptures that we have read in this lesson and take them totally out of context. When Jesus was asked in **Matthew 24** the question what shall be the sign of His coming and of the end of the world, He gave a very clear and concise answer.

Jesus did not give a template upon which all future distresses and natural disasters could be fitted into; but rather placed all of these events in a very clear timetable.

He concluded this list by saying, **“... this generation shall not pass until all these things be fulfilled.”** (**Matthew 24:34**) Jesus made it very clear that He was not talking about the end of the Physical world or planet at all.

The question is, **“Why are so many preachers and teachers misapplying these same Scriptures today?”** We have proved through this study on the use and context of the Greek words **“kosmos”**, **“oikoumene”** and **“aion”** that the only world that was getting ready to end in the first century was the **“world”** or **“age”** (**“aion”**) of the Old Covenant.

We are now living in that “future” “age”, “aion” or world that Jesus taught us about. This world has no end. (Ephesians 3:21)

Eph 3:21 Unto him^{G846} *be* glory^{G1391} in^{G1722} the^{G3588} church^{G1577} by^{G1722} Christ^{G5547} Jesus^{G2424} throughout^{G1519} all^{G3956} ages,^{G1074} world without end.^{G165 G165} Amen.^{G281}

G165

αἰών

aiōn

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From the same as [G104](#); properly an *age*; by extension *perpetuity* (also past); by implication the *world*; specifically (Jewish) a Messianic period (present or future): - age, course, eternal, (for) ever (-more), [n-]ever, (beginning of the, while the) world (began, without end). Compare [G5550](#).

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