

“THE SECOND DEATH”

CAN CHRISTIANS BE HURT OF THE SECOND DEATH?

By Arlen L. Chitwood

Exactly what does it mean in Rev. 2:11 for individuals “to be hurt of” *the second death*?

“He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.”

Revelation 2:11 is dealing with Christians, relative to overcoming or being overcome. And in the light of Rev. 20:4-6; 21:7, 8, which deals with the same subject, Rev. 2:11 can mean only one thing: Nonovercoming Christians are going to be “hurt of the second death,” defined in Scripture as having “their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone (Rev. 21:8b).

“Fire” in Scripture is associated with *the judgment of the saved as well as the judgment of the unsaved*; and, following judgment, nonovercoming Christians will be “hurt of the second death,” which is associated with *the lake of fire*.

Thus, the time when this will occur is following events at the judgment seat. And though the Christians’ works will be tried in fire at the judgment seat, this is not synonymous with Christians

having a part in “the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone.”

Rather, at this judgment, Christians will be shown to have either overcome or to have been overcome, with the carrying out of decisions and determinations made at the judgment seat occurring at a time following these events.

(Note in the judgment of the unsaved in Rev. 20:11-15 that the lake of fire and the second death enter into the matter *only following judgment*. The lake of fire and the second death come into view only following decisions and determinations surrounding their judgment.

And it will be the same for the saved preceding this time. They will first be judged. Only then, *only following the decisions and determinations surrounding their judgment*, do the lake of fire and the second death come into view.)

THE LAKE OF FIRE

The lake of fire is empty today, and it will be empty at the time Christians are judged. The first individuals to inhabit the lake of fire will be the beast and the false prophet, and their being cast therein *follows* the judgment of Christians.

Nonovercoming Christians themselves will not have their part in “the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone” until the actual millennial reign of Christ, which follows the beast and the false prophet being cast therein. Overcoming Christians will be *crowned* at this time, and nonovercoming Christians will experience *the second death* at this time. For the latter, the entire scene, from the judgment seat on into the millennium, is apparently what is being referred to in Heb. 10:27 — that which awaits the one guilty of the “wilful sin” (v. 26), for which there is *no sacrifice*:

“But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.”

It should not be thought strange that the same lake of fire appearing in connection with the outcome of the judgment of the unsaved first appears in connection with the outcome of the judgment of the saved. The very reason God brought “the lake burning with fire and brimstone” into existence was the entrance of sin into one province in His universe — a province where man, following his creation, found himself.

The lake of fire was prepared for the Devil and his angels following their sin (which had to do with regality — Satan seeking to exalt his throne [Isa. 14:13-15]), but it is also presently being reserved as the place where those rejecting the very reason for man’s creation (which had to do with regality as well [Gen. 1:26-28]) will ultimately find themselves — nonovercoming Christians first, and then the unsaved.

Thus, “the lake of fire” is connected with *sin in relation to regality and this earth* — whether angels or man (saved or unsaved). And though this lake of fire was prepared for “the devil and his angels” (the first to rebel in this respect), man, ignoring or rejecting the reason for his creation (whether saved man, or unsaved man), will have a part in the same lake of fire. For saved man, it will be *millennial*; and for unsaved man, it will be *eternal*.

JUDGMENT

Bear one thing in mind about *judgment*. *No man* (saved or unsaved) will ever appear in judgment to determine his eternal salvation or eternal damnation. The question surrounding eternal sal-

vation is *always* taken care of before man enters into judgment, and this matter *will not* be an issue at any future judgment. Every man will be *resurrected* “in his own order [‘in his own company’ (whether a company of saved individuals, or a company of unsaved individuals)]” (I Cor. 15:23), and every man will be *judged* in the company in which he is resurrected.

The saved and the unsaved form entirely separate companies, in accord with their separate resurrections, and will be judged at different times. When the saved are judged, only the saved will appear; and when the unsaved are judged, only the unsaved will appear. In each case they will appear in a particular company with the issue pertaining to their salvation being a settled, closed matter at that time. There is simply no such thing in Scripture as companies of saved and unsaved individuals being judged together, at the same time.

All judgment, whether of the saved or of the unsaved, will be on the basis of *works*— the works of the ones being judged (*cf.* Matt. 16:27; I Cor. 3:12-15; Rev. 20:11-15). And such works can have nothing whatsoever to do with issues pertaining to eternal salvation or eternal damnation. Redeemed man has been saved strictly on the basis of the work of Another, and unredeemed man abides in his present state simply because he has not accepted the work of Another. Resultingly, neither eternal salvation nor eternal damnation *can* be an issue when the works of man come under scrutiny, as will be the case in *all* future judgments.

No unsaved person will appear before the judgment seat of Christ, and no saved person will appear before the great white throne. In each case, the eternal destiny of all individuals involved will have been determined *before* judgment occurs. And the same principle must hold true for all other judgments (*e.g.* that of Israel [Ezek. 20:33-38]; the

Tribulation martyrs [Rev. 20:4-6]; or living Gentiles who survive the Great Tribulation [Matt. 25:31-46]).

All future judgments will be carried out in orderly fashions. As in resurrection, so in judgment, every man will appear in his own company; and within this company every man will answer for his own actions, performed either as a saved or as an unsaved individual.

The judgment of living Gentiles at the time of Christ’s return, as outlined in Matt. 25:31-46, is often looked upon by some as a general judgment of saved and unsaved individuals, with issues of this judgment pertaining to the eternal destiny of those being judged. But such *cannot* be the case at all.

Note first that the ones coming under judgment are separated into two categories — referred to as “sheep” on the one hand, and “goats” on the other — with there being one destiny for *the sheep* and another destiny for *the goats*.

Then note that *the sheep* will be allowed to “inherit the kingdom,” but not so with *the goats*. Rather, they will be told, “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting [‘age-lasting’] fire, prepared for the devil and his angels” (vv. 34, 41).

Sheep and *goats* are metaphors in this passage, used in an *antithetical sense*; and *inheriting the kingdom* or *departing into everlasting (age-lasting) fire*, in connection with the *sheep* and *goats*, present destinies for each, set forth in an *antithetical manner*. And neither the text nor the context has to do with eternal verities. Rather, both have to do with *the 1,000-year reign of Christ, the coming kingdom of Christ*.

Accordingly, *either realizing or not realizing an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ is in view throughout*. Thus, the thought of “sheep,” “inherit the kingdom,” “goats,” and “everlasting [age-last-

ing] fire” must be understood with *the kingdom in view*, not with eternal verities in view.

(The word translated “everlasting” in Matt. 25:41 is from *aionios* in the Greek text. This is the adjective form of *aion*, from which we derive our English word, *aeon*. Neither the noun nor the adjective means “eternal.” Rather, the two words literally have to do with “a period of time,” usually thought of as “an age.”

There is no word for “eternal” in the Greek text of the New Testament [nor in the Hebrew text of the O.T., for that matter]. The only way in which the Greek language can express “eternal,” apart possibly from contextual considerations [*e.g.*, when *aion* or *aionios* is used relative to Deity], is through a plural use of *aion* [*e.g.*, Heb. 13:8; “ages”] or through a double use of *aion*, in the plural and articular both times [*e.g.*, Rev. 1:6; “the ages of the ages”].)

The saved alone are in a position to come under the type judgment seen in Matt. 25:31-46. And the events surrounding this judgment parallel those seen relative to the judgment of Christians. Individuals are seen judged on the basis of works; and the outcome of this judgment is two-fold: 1) realizing an inheritance in the kingdom on the one hand, and 2) having a part in the lake of fire on the other.

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