

The Time of the End – Part 6.2
A Series on the Book of Revelation
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Adapted from Arlen Chitwood's book; Presented by Jeanne Alley

“THE SECOND DEATH”

1). “The second death” is an expression peculiar to the Book of Revelation, and it appears four times in this book. It is used *twice* in texts where the word “overcomes” is used, *once* in connection with those who are martyred during the Tribulation, and *once* in connection with the unsaved dead from throughout the 6,000 years of this age.

The second death appears in the following four passages –

Revelation 2:8-11

8 "And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: The first and the last, who was dead, and has come to life, says this: 9 'I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich), and the blasphemy by those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. 10 'Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. 11 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.'

Revelation 20:6

Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.

Revelation 20:14

And death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.

Revelation 21:7-8

7 "He who overcomes shall inherit these things [Lit. “all things”], and I will be his God and he will be My son. 8 But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

b) It is evident in Rev. 20:14 that “the second death” is used in association with the unsaved, for the context is that of the Great White Throne Judgment, which occurs after the Messianic Era is over.

c) It is equally evident that the expression “the second death” is used in the other three passages in the Book of Revelation in association with at least a portion of the saved.

d) The “fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars” in Rev. 21:8 are usually looked upon by students of Scripture as a reference to unredeemed individuals, synonymous with the ones in Rev. 20:11-15 who appear at the Great White Throne Judgment.

e) However, contextually, this cannot be the case at all. The subject in verse seven, leading into verse eight, is *overcoming and realizing an inheritance as a son*. Verse eight simply describes the “unbelieving [‘unfaithful’]” ones – the nonovercomers – and reveals that which will be their lot when they appear before the Lord in judgment.

f) A similar description of individuals to that of Rev. 21:8 appears in I Cor. 6:9, 10, where an *inheritance* in the kingdom is also in view –

“Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not *inherit* the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate [those caught up in the delights and pleasures of this present world (*cf.* I John 2:15-28)], nor abusers of themselves with mankind [homosexuals], nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall *inherit* the kingdom of God.”

g) In this section of Scripture, the text and context both clearly reveal that Christians alone are in view. The subject matter reveals this in the text, and the identity of the ones being addressed reveals this in the context. So, going back to Revelation 21:8, it is clearly teaching (as in Rev. 2:11) that saved individuals can indeed be hurt by the second death.

h) Revelation 21:8 (where unrighteous “saved” people receive their part in the second death) cannot be equated with Rev. 20:14 (where the “dead” are judged after the Great White Throne Judgment), even though both verses refer to “the lake of fire” and “the second death.”

i) These two verses are not dealing with the same thing, the same individuals, or even the same time period. Revelation 21:8 deals with the judgment of the saved *preceding* the millennium, with millennial verities in view; and Rev. 20:14 deals with the judgment of

the unsaved *following* the millennium, with eternal verities in view. Nothing is the same in the two passages, save the existence of *the same lake of fire*, with an associated *second death*.

j) The seven overcomer's promises in Revelation chapters two and three reveal different facets of that which God has promised to those who overcome the three great enemies confronting every Christian – the *world*, the *flesh*, and the *Devil*.

k) The promise to the overcomer in the Church in Smyrna that he would not be "hurt of the second death" is only one facet of the larger scope covered by *all* of the overcomer's promises to the seven Churches. The entirety of the matter appears to be summed up by the words, "inherit all things," in Rev. 21:7. The overcomer will be a co-heir with Christ in the kingdom and realize all the promises to the overcomers in chapters two and three (*cf.* Heb. 1:2).

2) Let's take a closer look at the portion of Scripture in which we read of the second death relative to the martyrs of the Tribulation–

Revelation 20:2-6

And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, 3 and threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he should not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time. 4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of the testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. 5 The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection. 6 Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.

a) The martyrs here are themselves revealed as overcomers. These are the individuals who will gain "the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name" during the Tribulation (Rev. 15:2). A segment of this group was seen when the fifth seal was opened (6:9-11; *cf.* 13:7-15); and they were told at this time to "rest yet for a little season, until their fellow servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled."

b) But when events depicted in Rev. 20:4-6 come to pass, the Tribulation will be over, the beast and false prophet will have been cast into the lake of fire, the armies of the

earth will have been overthrown, Satan will have been bound in the abyss, and the martyred saints of the Tribulation will have been resurrected to be judged (19:11ff). These individuals, *overcoming during the Tribulation*, will, as Christians *overcoming today*, occupy positions with Christ in the kingdom. *The second death* will have “no power” over the Tribulation martyrs (v. 6). They, as will have been the case with numerous Christians prior to this time, will be revealed as *overcomers* and will not “be hurt of the second death” (v. 4).

c) There is an obvious Scriptural connection between the second death and the lake of fire.

3) The lake of fire was “prepared for the devil and his angels” -

Matthew 25:41

Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:

a) The lake of fire, the “everlasting fire,” will be their final abode following the millennial reign of Christ over the earth. Though prepared for the Devil and his angels, the lake of fire will also be the final abode of the unsaved dead from the lineage of Adam. Unsaved man will appear in judgment after the millennial reign has been concluded and will then be cast “into the lake of fire” (Rev. 20:11-15).

b) It would appear from Rev. 20:13 that more than just the unsaved from the lineage of Adam will be present at this Great White Throne Judgment -

Revelation 20:11-14

11 And I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. 12 And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is [the book] of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. 13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one [of them] according to their deeds. 14 And death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.

c) The “sea” which “gave up the dead” cannot refer to the coming forth of those in the human realm, for their being brought forth is referred to immediately following by the words “death and hell [*Hades*] delivered up the dead which were in them.”

d) The “sea” giving up the dead could be referring to the inhabitants of a place which Scripture locates “under the waters” –

Job 26:5

Dead things are formed from under the waters, and the inhabitants thereof.

e) This should literally read “*Rephaim* are put to pain [writhe like a woman in travail] deep under the waters, and their inhabitants.” This could be a reference to *Tartarus*, a prison where certain fallen angels and their progeny (the *Nephilim* and *Rephaim* [different names for the same individuals]) are confined (II Peter 2:4 [the word “hell” should be translated *Tartarus*]).

f) Revelation 20:13 could perhaps be saying that not only the unsaved dead from the lineage of Adam will be appearing at the Great White Throne Judgment, but fallen angels and the *Nephilim* and *Rephaim* will in all likelihood appear there as well. Then they will all be cast into the lake of fire, where they will spend the eternal ages following the millennium.

4) Exactly what does it mean “to be hurt of” *the second death* in Rev. 2:11? In the light of Rev. 20:4-6; 21:7, 8, which deals with overcoming and being overcome, this can mean only one thing: Nonovercoming Christians are going to “have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death” (Rev. 21:8b).

a) “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*.

b) 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 the same thing (the same “fire”) as 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.

c) 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.

d) 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.

e) Nonovercoming Christians themselves will not have their part in the lake of fire 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.

f) For the non-overcomers, 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* –

Hebrews 10:27

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

5). 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.

a) 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.

b) 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*.

c) 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 salvation 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.

d) 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.

e) 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.

f) 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]).

6) Continuing with the thought of “second death,” consider the following passage –

James 5:19-20

“Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins” (James 5:19, 20).

a) According to I Cor. 3:11-15, Christians whose works are burned at the judgment seat will “suffer loss.” This cannot refer to the loss of rewards, for rewards enter into this judgment only after a person is *approved*. The disapproved will have no rewards to lose. The only thing in their possession possible for them to lose will be their souls (lives). Matthew 16:25-27 refers to the saved coming under judgment and the possibility of a person losing his soul –

26 For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? 27 For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.

b) The word “lose” in these verses and the word “loss” in I Cor. 3:15 are translations of the same word in the Greek text. The loss experienced by the person in Matt. 16:25-27 is that of his *soul*; and it must be the same in I Cor. 3:11-15, for the judgments referred to are the same.

c) The Epistle of James, an epistle dealing with the salvation of the soul, concludes by referring to the possibility of a Christian experiencing “death” in relation to his *soul* (5:19, 20). This thought is set forth in an opposite sense to that of realizing the “salvation” of his *soul* (1:21). Failing in the present race of the faith (I Cor. 9:24-27; cf. II Tim. 4:7, 8), a Christian will be *disapproved* at the judgment seat. He will have failed to overcome, be victorious; and, failing in this manner, he will *lose his soul*.

d) Experiencing “death” in James 5:20 can, contextually, only be synonymous with *the loss of the soul (life)*; that is to say, a person entering into this experience will be “hurt of the second death.”

e) “Losing one’s soul [life]” and “being hurt of the second death” are two ways of saying the same thing.

7). In order for a “second death” to exist, *for both the saved and unsaved*, there must previously have been a “first death.” Such a death, of course, is introduced in the fall of Adam -

Romans 5:12

“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.”

a) Every man comes into this world via the birth from below (natural birth associated with this world, “born dead in trespasses and sins” [Eph. 2:1,2]) and becomes a partaker of the first death through his association with Adam.

The second death will befall unredeemed man, with eternal verities in view, because of his continued association with Adam (due to his rejection of a “new birth”). This second death (which is permanent) will be experienced after a face-to-face with His Creator at the Great White Throne Judgment.

b) But for redeemed man, the second death is a different matter altogether. Through the birth from above, he is no longer associated with Adam and death in the same sense as unredeemed man; and the possibility of his being hurt of the second death concerns events which occur *in an entirely different sphere of activity*.

i) The second death, for the redeemed individual, is *temporary*.

c) Adam fell from the position in which he had been created; and more is involved in Adam's fall than simply eternal (forever and ever) verities (as most Christians think), affecting only the unredeemed.

i) Adam had been called into existence to assume rulership over the earth; and although the entrance of sin brought about eternal separation from God (apart from redemption), it also resulted in his disqualification to rule in Satan's stead.

ii) Adam, through the fall, found himself disqualified to occupy the very position for which he had been created. Initial redemption itself did not place Adam back in this position (Gen. 3:21-24); nor does initial redemption today place man back in this position.

d) Redeemed man today, as Adam following his fall and initial redemption, remains barred from the tree of life, *awaiting the salvation of his soul*. Following the fall in Genesis chapter three, the tree of life does not enter the affairs of man again *until* the salvation of the soul is brought to pass; and this will occur only following the issues and determinations surrounding the judgment seat, at the end of this age.

e) Man ultimately occupying the position which Adam was created to assume requires his identification with *a new Federal Head – the last Adam*. The last Adam appeared and met Satan in a face-to-face confrontation to show that He was fully qualified to redeem that which the first Adam forfeited in the fall. He then provided redemption for man through the sacrifice of Himself and presently awaits the day when He will take the kingdom.

f) Those "in Christ" have been redeemed, with a view to their being co-heirs with Christ after He wrests control of the kingdom from Satan and his angels. Those ruling with the last Adam will constitute His bride and reign with Him, as Eve would have reigned with the first Adam had both remained obedient and occupied the position for which man had been created.

g) The second death, as it will affect Christians, can be properly understood only in the light of a parallel between that which Adam failed to realize in the past and that which unfaithful Christians will fail to realize in the future – the very purpose for their existence. And as *the first death* entered into man's former failure, *the second death* will

enter into man's latter failure — for the saved on the one hand, and for the unsaved on the other.

h) Experiencing “the second death” for the redeemed, through failure to realize one's calling, can in no way pertain to eternal verities. Such *cannot* be in view at all. Christians are present possessors of an eternal salvation based entirely upon the finished work of Christ at Calvary; and there can be *no such thing* as “the second death” affecting any Christian on the basis of this salvation, else the finished work of Christ itself would be called into question and come into disrepute.

i) The Christians' association with “the second death” can only pertain *to millennial verities and the loss of one's soul*, the exact association provided by each reference in the Book of Revelation. Unfaithful Christians will experience “the second death” during the millennial reign of Christ. That is to say, they will lose their souls (lives) and be denied positions with Christ in the kingdom. Again, “the second death” for them is *millennial only*, not eternal.

j) Nonovercoming Christians, through experiencing “the second death,” will be:

“...punished with everlasting [Gk. *aionios*, ‘age-lasting’] destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe...” (II Thess. 1:9b, 10a).

k) For the unredeemed though, “the second death” can only pertain *to eternal verities*. As a result of Adam's sin and their nonacceptance of Christ's sacrifice on Calvary, the unredeemed reside in a condition described in Scripture as “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2:1; Col. 2:13).

l) They, in this condition, can have nothing to do with matters pertaining to rulership over the earth. Eternal verities alone are in view; and the second death, as it will affect the unredeemed, must be understood in this sense.

m) Unredeemed man will experience “the second death” *following* the millennium, with only *the endless ages in view*. The unredeemed will *remain* in their spiritually dead condition and, in the lake of fire, be *eternally separated* from God:

“And death and hell [‘Hades’] were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire” (Rev. 20:14, 15).

ADDITIONAL QUESTION FOR DISCUSSION TONIGHT:

If the second death is the lake of fire, does that make the metaphorical reference to "Gehenna" (relative to the unfaithful saved who do not enter the kingdom) synonymous to the second death/lake of fire?