

“THE SECOND DEATH”

CAN CHRISTIANS BE HURT OF THE SECOND DEATH?

By Arlen L. Chirwood

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 overcoming, being overcome, and the second death — Rev. 2:11 can mean *only one thing*:

Overcoming Christians, as stated in the verse, *are not* going to be “hurt of the second death.” But the converse of that has to be equally true as well, for the promise carries a *clearly implied warning*. 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 though the Christians’ works will be tried “by [‘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. And it will be at this time, following judgment, that nonovercom-

ing Christians will be “hurt of the second death,” which is associated with *the lake of fire*.

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

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 pertaining to their judgment*, do the second death and the lake of fire come into view.)

The Overcomer’s Promises

The word “overcome” is a translation of the Greek word *nikao*, which means “to conquer” or “to gain a victory over.” The thought inherent in the word *nikao* (or *nike*, the noun form of the word) always means *to be victorious in a contest or conflict*. The “overcomers” are the conquerors, the victors; they are the ones who will have successfully run the race of the faith; they are the ones who will have conquered the numerous encountered obstacles along the way.

There are seven different overcomer’s promises in Revelation chapters two and three, and each promise is *millennial* in its scope of fulfillment. That is, these promises will be realized during the 1,000-year reign of Christ after Christians have had their works tried “by [‘in’] fire” at the judgment seat.

(There can be no such thing as Christians being hurt of the second death beyond the Millennium, for Rev. 21:4 plainly declares that there will be no more death during this time. Former things of this nature will have passed away.

Nor can the Son invite Christians to sit on “my throne” [the seventh and last overcomer’s promise; Rev. 3:21] beyond the Millennium, for He will not be seated on this throne at that time. Instead He will be seated with His Father on “the throne of God and of the Lamb” [Rev. 22:1, 3].

During the Millennium, regal power over the earth will emanate from *the Son’s throne* above the present earth. But during the ages beyond, regal power over the universe will emanate from *the throne of God and of the Lamb* on the new earth.)

Christians have been saved with a view to being overcomers and bringing forth fruit. This matter comprises the very heart of the message which is to be proclaimed to Christians throughout the dispensation. Israel has been set aside during this time, and God is calling out another people — a separate and distinct people — “for his name,” taken mainly from among the Gentiles (Acts 15:14).

Those whom God is presently dealing with comprise an entirely new creation, which is neither Jew nor Gentile, forming *one new man* “in Christ.” And God is extending to individual members of this one new man, to Christians, the privilege of overcoming and bringing forth fruit, with a view to their occupying positions as joint-heirs with His Son in the heavenly sphere of the coming kingdom.

God has set aside an entire dispensation for this purpose, and judgment at the end of this dispensation will reveal man’s response to this privilege. Some Christians will be shown to have overcome, possessing works comparable to “gold, silver, precious stones”; but other Christians will be shown to have been overcome, possessing works comparable to “wood, hay, stubble.”

The overcomers will, at that time, inherit the promised blessings of Revelation chapters two and

three; but those shown to have been overcome will be denied these blessings. This is the subject matter dealt with in the opening three chapters of the Book of Revelation.

Being Hurt of the Second Death

That which is in view concerning a nonovercoming Christian one day being hurt of the second death following decisions and determinations at the judgment seat, as previously seen, is explained later in this same book. *The second death* for the nonovercomer is having a “part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone” (Rev. 21:8); and having a part in the lake of fire is explained through God’s dealings with the unsaved in the previous chapter as being “cast into the lake of fire” (20:15).

And seeing individuals cast into “a furnace of fire” in Matt. 13:42, 50 is simply another way of expressing the same thing.

(The parables in Matthew chapter thirteen deal with the Kingdom of the Heavens and fruit bearing, not with eternal salvation. Thus, the subject matter has to do with *the saved*, not with the unsaved.

Further, In Matt. 13:1, Christ going out of “the house” [a reference to *Israel*] and down by “the seaside” [a reference to *the Gentiles*], *the one new man* “in Christ” [about to be brought into existence at the time these parables were given] is seen throughout the first four parables. In this respect, those gathered out of Christ’s kingdom, which “offend” and “do iniquity,” who are cast into a furnace of fire, can only be identified as Christians.

Also, the casting into a furnace of fire in Matt. 13:42, 50 occurs before the Millennium. The unsaved cast into the lake of fire in Rev. 20:15 occurs following the Millennium. They are not the same.)

But is the second death, being cast into the lake of fire, something which will be carried out in a literal sense? Or, is Scripture dealing with metaphors at this point? And, if the latter, what about the unsaved being cast into the lake of fire at the end of the Millennium, in Rev. 20:11-15?

If one is literal, would not the other have to be literal as well? Or, if one is metaphorical, would not the other have to be metaphorical as well?

Allowing Scripture to Interpret Scripture

In John 15:6 and Heb. 6:8, saved individuals are spoken of in a metaphorical sense, where *a burning with fire* is referenced. And the context both places has to do with either bearing fruit or not bearing fruit, which is exactly the same thing seen in the Matthew thirteen parables. Or, as the matter is expressed in Revelation chapters two and three, either overcoming or being overcome.

And the negative side of the matter is expressed at least two other ways in Scripture — being cast into *Gehenna* (a reference to the place of refuse outside the city walls of Jerusalem at this time; Matt. 5:22, 29, 30; 23:15, 33) or being cast into *outer darkness* (Matt. 8:12; 22:13; 25:30).

Overcoming or not overcoming and being unhurt or being hurt of the second death in Rev. 2:11 is expressed a slightly different way in Rom. 8:13:

“For if ye [a reference to ‘brethren’ in v. 12] live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify [put to death] the deeds of the body, ye shall live.”

Whether *Gehenna* or *outer darkness* in Matthew, *a burning with fire* in John and Hebrews, *being cast into a furnace or lake of fire* in Matthew

and Revelation, or *suffering death or being hurt of the second death* in Romans and Revelation, different facets of exactly the same thing are in view. All of these are used in contexts showing that they have to do with saved people in relation to fruit bearing and the kingdom.

Through comparing Scripture with Scripture, it is plain that these are simply different ways of expressing *the same thing*. And since a literal casting into outer darkness, Gehenna, or a furnace or lake of fire could not possibly be in view (for these different places could not possibly be looked upon as referring to the same place in a literal sense), it is evident that *metaphors* are being used throughout.

But relative to the unsaved and the lake of fire, this is simply not expressed other ways in Scripture as it is with the saved, leaving no room for any thought other than understanding the matter as *literal*, not metaphorical.

Aside from the preceding, it is clear that all Christians, faithful and unfaithful alike, will be in the kingdom. This is seen in type in Genesis chapters eighteen and nineteen. Both Abraham and Lot, in the final analysis, are seen on the mount (a “mountain” in Scripture signifies a *kingdom*). But note the stark difference in the place which each occupied. Abraham stood before the Lord, where he had always stood (18:22; 19:27). Lot though found himself in a place separate from the Lord, in a place where he also had always stood (19:1, 30).

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