

THE LAKE OF FIRE AND BRIMSTONE WHICH IS THE SECOND DEATH

Rev. 21:8.

Several prophetic pen pictures of the Millennial Age and its work in chapters 20 and 21 of Revelation, clearly show the object and result of that age of trial, in harmony with the balance of the Scriptures as just noted in the preceding articles.

Chapter 20 verses 2,4,11 with verses 1,2,10,11, of chapter 21 shows the beginning of the age of judgment, the restraining of blinding errors, and misleading systems. The beast and the false prophet are the chief symbols and represent organizations or systems of error which we will not here pause to explain. (We have done so heretofore, and will do so again D.V. in a succeeding volume of Millennial Dawn.) This judgment against the „thrones” of the present time, and against „the beast and false prophet” *systems*, follows speedily upon the introduction of this Millennial judgment reign. The thrones of present dominion of earth will be „cast down” and the dominion transferred to the great Prophet and Judge. (Compare Dan. 7:9,14,22.) And the systems of error will be speedily judged worthy of *destruction*, the lake of fire, the second death.—See Rev. 19:20.

Thus the *second* destruction (or death) begins quite early in the new Judgment—with the systems of error. But it does not reach men as individuals until they have first had full trial with fullest opportunity to choose life and live forever. Chapters 20:12,13 and 21:3-7 indicate the blessed favorable trial in which all both dead and living [except the church who are with Christ Jesus, kings, priests, joint-heirs, and judges] will be brought to a full knowledge of the truth, relieved from sorrow and pain, and freed from every blinding error and prejudice, and tried „according to their *works*.”

The grand outcome of that trial will be, a clean Universe. As the Revelator expresses it, „*Every creature* which is in heaven and on the earth ... heard I saying, Blessing and honor and glory and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the lamb forever.” But this result will be accomplished in harmony with all God’s dealings past and present, which have always recognized man’s freedom of will to choose good or evil, life or death.

We cannot doubt that when in the close of the Millennial age God will again for a „little season”

permit Evil to triumph, in order thereby to test his creatures then thoroughly acquainted with both good and evil and the consequences of each, and to demonstrate to all of them his justice, that those who finally prefer and choose evil will be cut off, destroyed. Thus God will for all eternity remove all who do not love righteousness and hate iniquity.

We read regarding that testing, that Satan will endeavor to lead astray *all* mankind whose numbers will then be as the sand of the sea for multitude: but that *many* of them will *choose* evil and disobedience, with past experience before them, and unhampered by present weaknesses and blinding influences, we cannot suppose. However, when God does not tell us either the number or proportion of those found worthy of life, and those judged worthy of death (the second death), we may not dogmatize. Of one thing we may be confident, God willeth not the death of the wicked, but would that all should turn to him and live; and no one shall be destroyed in that „lake of fire and brimstone” (figurative of utter destruction, as Gehenna) who is worthy of life, whose living longer would be a blessing to himself or to others in harmony with righteousness.

That utter and hopeless destruction is intended only for *willful* evil doers, who like Satan, in pride of heart and rebellion against God, will love and do evil notwithstanding the manifestations of God’s disapproval, and notwithstanding their experience with its penalties. Seemingly the goodness and love of God in the provision of a ransom, restitution, and second chance for man, instead of leading these to an abhorrence of sin, will lead them to suppose that God is too loving to cut them off in the second death, or that if he did so, he would give them other and yet other chances. Building thus upon a supposed weakness in the divine character, these may be led to try to take advantage of the grace (favor) of God, and to use it as a license for willful sin. But they shall go no further, for their folly shall be manifest. Their utter destruction will prove to the righteous the harmony and perfect balance of Justice, Wisdom, Love and Power in the divine Ruler. Such are called the angels (messengers, followers, servants,) of Satan. And for such as well as for Satan, the utter destruction of the second death is prepared by the wise, loving and just Creator. And so, in the parable of the sheep and goats the latter are called messengers or servants of Satan. To them he will say, „Depart from me ye cursed [cursed a second time having been relieved and released from the first curse of death and now condemned or accursed a second time for their *own willful* sin] into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his messengers. The *fire* is a symbol of *destruction* as much as the sheep and goats are symbols, hence the thought would be as in Revelation—everlasting destruction—the second death.

And so we read, These shall go away into everlasting punishment [Greek *kolasin* „cutting off” from life—the same word is used in Greek for the cutting off of branches from a tree]: they shall go into the punishment prescribed for *willful* sinners under the second trial, namely the second death.

Everlasting torment, mark you, is not the punishment, but *death*: „The wages of sin is *death*,,—cutting off from life, extinction.

An inference may be drawn from this parable, from the figures used by our Lord, that the willful sinners who will go into the second death will be few compared with the obedient who will enter into life; for sheep are much more numerous than goats.

The true character of the goat class is portrayed in Rev. 21:8. The fearful and unbelieving [who will not trust God], the abominable, murderers [brother haters], whoremongers, sorcerers and idolaters [such as misappropriate and misuse divine favors, who give to self or any thing or creature that service and honor which belongs to God] and all liars—“whosoever loveth and maketh a lie” [in a word, all who do not love the truth and *seek* for it, and at cost defend and hold it], shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone [the *Gehenna*, symbol of utter destruction], which is the Second Death. Such company would be repulsive to any honest, upright being. It is hard to tolerate such *now*, when we can *sympathize* with them, knowing that such dispositions are now in great measure the result of inherited weakness of the flesh. We are moved to a measure of sympathy by the remembrance that in our own cases, often when we would do good, evil is present with us. But in the close of the Second Judgment, when the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall have given every advantage and opportunity of knowledge and ability, this class will be an abhorrence and detestation to *all* in harmony with the King of Glory. And we shall rejoice when, the trial being ended, the *gift of life*, which these shall have proved themselves unworthy of, shall be taken from them, and the corrupters of the earth and all their work and influence shall be destroyed.

Rev. 23:10, tells us, that after the final test in the end of the Millennium, Satan will be cast into the lake of fire (symbol, like *Gehenna*, of *utter destruction*), and reminds us of the beast and false prophet, the *systems* which in the Gospel age deceived some, saying that they (these systems) shall be tormented, day and night, forever; or, as expressed

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in Chap. 19:3, speaking of one of these systems, „Her *smoke* rises up forever and ever.” That is to say, the remembrance of, or lessons attendant upon the *destruction* of the systems of deception and error, will be lastingly remembered—as smoke continues to ascend after a destructive fire has done its work.

Verse 9 tells of the *destruction* of those who join with Satan in the last rebellion, and verse 15 tells us of that same destruction in other words, using the symbol „lake of fire” to represent it.

Verse 14 says: „And death and hell [*hades*—the tomb] were cast into the lake of fire [*destruction*], this is the second death”—the lake of fire.—*Sinaitic MS*.

„Death and hell” [*hades*] is used several times in this book as expressive of the *first* death. Hades is the state or condition of death, and is sometimes translated the grave. It is called a great prison house, because those who enter it, though actually extinct, are *reckoned* as not extinct, but merely *confined for a time*, and to be brought forth to life, liberty and a new trial by him who ransomed them from the penalty of the first trial. It is in view of God’s purpose and promise of a restitution of all and a second trial, that the tomb is spoken of as a great „prison house,” in which the captives of death (the Adamic, or first death) await deliverance. Though dissolved in death, the identity of each being is preserved in the mind and power of God, and will be reproduced in due time by resurrection power. Hades, the prison, the tomb, is referred to by the prophet, the Master himself, and the apostles. (Hos. 13:14; Isa. 61:1; Luke 4:18; John 5:28; 1 Cor. 15:55.) The grave is really a symbol of hope; for we would not speak of it as a prison house were it not for our hopes of resurrection. If we believed that death ended existence forever, all hope of release of the dead would vanish, and we would not think of them as in prison, nor hope for their deliverance.

Apply this thought to the verse under consideration, and it implies this:—The first death and the hopes of resurrection, which, by God’s favor, were attached to it, will pass away or be utterly destroyed in the second death. From that time forth there will be no such thing as death under the first sentence, because of Adam’s sin, and a hope of resurrection from it. That will all have been accomplished; every prisoner will have been set free from all that guilt, condemnation

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and penalty of the first trial, and the sentence of the second trial, whether to second life or second death, will have fully swallowed up and destroyed the penalty of the first sentence, as well as the hopes which attached to it. Hades is never associated with the second death, because those who go into the second death are in no sense „*prisoners of hope*,”; they are utterly destroyed, extinct, without hope of any deliverance by resurrection. Hence the propriety of *hades* being *destroyed*.

The destruction of the first death and *hades* commences with the beginning of the Millennial reign and continues to its close. It is a *gradual* process of casting into destruction. This is in harmony with Paul’s explanation of Isaiah’s prophecy, 1 Cor. 15:54,55, „*Then* [when the little flock, „we,” have been changed to the full divine nature and likeness and begun to reign and bless the world—*then*] shall be brought to pass the saying that is written—Isa. 25:6-8, „He will destroy [cast into *destruction*, or in symbol „the lake of fire”] in this mountain [symbol of the „Kingdom of God” or the „New Jerusalem”] the face of the covering cast over all people [death] and the vail [ignorance] that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up [the first] death victoriously.”

So then the casting of death and the grave into destruction during the Millennial age, is a part of the second destruction which will include every improper, injurious and useless thing.—Isa. 11:9; Psa. 101:5-8. But the second death, the sentence of that second trial, is final; it will never be destroyed; and let all the lovers of righteousness say Amen; for to destroy the second death, to remove the sentence of the second trial, would be to let loose again all the evil systems (beast etc.) and Satan, and all who love and practice wrong and deception, and dishonor the Lord, to oppose, offend and endeavor to overthrow those who love and desire to serve him and enjoy his favor. We rejoice that there is no danger of this, but that divine justice unites with divine wisdom, love and power to bring in everlasting righteousness on a permanent basis.

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