

The Fire of God

AND THE SECOND DEATH

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THE PURPOSE OF DIVINE FIRE

The basic purpose of the divine fire of God is to cleanse, purify, purge, temper and change. It is to rid of impurities, of filth, of undesirable elements. There is no better way to deal with filth than to deal with it by fire. The divine fire will burn up all the governments, institutions, systems and fruitage of the carnal mind. It will melt all the customs, cultures, traditions and practices of society and make of this earth a new earth wherein dwells righteousness. Every man's work will eventually be tested in this fire. The fire will try every man's work of what sort it is. If you and I build into our walls wood, hay, and stubble, that fire will find it out, and the walls will come tumbling down.

When God turns on the heat, the blazing light of His Spirit and Word – some things begin to change! The fire is never sent to destroy the *person*, but to purge out all that hinders and separates him from his God, to consume the pride, arrogance, hostility, defiance and rebellion of the flesh, the carnal mind.

More than three centuries ago when the Black Plague swept through London, England, more than 68,000 men, women and children were sickened with the putrid fever, suffered nameless agonies, passed into delirium, sometimes with convulsions, and then died. Before the end of the terrible nightmare of anguish and death, what was thought to be an even greater tragedy occurred. The city caught fire, the whole heavens were ablaze as the Great Fire destroyed more than 13,200 homes and 89 churches. Most of the city, which was built largely of wood, lay in ashes. Wonder of wonders! As soon as the last dying embers cooled and the smoke cleared, the inhabitants of the city discovered that the Plague had been stayed! Not another person died of the epidemic. The Plague never returned. The fire had killed the bacteria-carrying fleas and rats that caused the Plague. It took a fire to do it!

Make no mistake! *"Our God is a consuming fire"* (Hebrews 12:29).

THE SECOND DEATH

The book of Revelation is a book of symbols. In the introduction to this marvelous book the beloved John explains,

“The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him, to show unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass; and He sent and signified it by His angel unto His servant John” (Revelation 1:1).

The word “signified” is from the Greek “*semaino*” meaning to indicate or communicate by means of signs and symbols. The meanings of all the symbols of the Revelation are given, either in the book itself, or elsewhere in the Scriptures. He tells us exactly what certain things are. In Revelation 20:14 God tells us exactly what the Second Death is.

“And death and hell were cast into the Lake of Fire. THIS IS THE SECOND DEATH.”

Now let me make this a little plainer. Definitions of men can be given backward. For instance, the definition, “An island is a tract of land completely surrounded by water,” can be given thus: “A tract of land completely surrounded by water is an island.” This is but another way of stating the same fact. It does not, in any way, change the meaning.

Now let us try this on the definition of the Second Death. The Bible states it thus:

“Death and hell were cast into the Lake of Fire. THIS IS the Second Death.”

Now let us turn this around for clarity.

“The Second Death IS death and hell cast into the Lake of Fire.”

Therefore we have exactly the same meaning either way it is stated. What is the Second Death? It is the first death and hell cast into the Lake of Fire! This fact is very important. The Second Death is not merely the Lake of Fire. The Second Death is not men being tortured for ever in the Lake of Fire. God has made it very simple and plain. The Second Death is the first death and hell “*cast into the Lake of Fire.*” That is God’s definition.

Can we now open the eyes of our understanding to see that everything cast into the Lake of Fire pertains to *death*? Death itself is cast into the Lake of Fire. Hell, the realm of the dead, is cast into the Lake of Fire. And those whose names are not written in the Book of Life, those who are dead, in trespasses and in sins, who inhabit hell, are cast into the Lake of Fire. That is the end of death and hell and sin, for God shall destroy death in the Lake of Fire, He shall burn up hell in the Lake of Fire, and He shall consume sin and rebellion in the Lake of Fire.

THE DEATH OF DEATHS

How I long to see the end of sin and death and hell! The time is coming, praise His name, when God shall be “*All in all,*” and there shall be neither sin, nor sinners, nor death, nor hell. It is clear that God does not destroy men in the Lake of Fire, nowhere does it say that, for that would be a contradiction of terms. How can you destroy death by creating death? How can you abolish death by bringing men under the power of eternal death from which there is no escape? Oh, no, it is not men who are destroyed in the Lake of Fire – it is sin and death and hell that are destroyed.

“And the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death” (I Corinthians 15:26).

Thus, *“the Lake of Fire”* is nothing more nor less than the death of deaths!

The following words by Ray Prinzing give fresh insight into this wonderful truth:

The question arises, “Is the Second Death the same kind of death as the first?” Many people think that it is a repetition of the first, and that the results are the same, while its action is more severe and cruel, and destructive, being by fire. And some Christians add very sorrowfully, “and from this Second Death there is no resurrection, it is an endless torment in agony,” BUT NOT SO! For God’s seconds are never duplicates of the first, they are always better, higher, and more powerful than the firsts, and used to counter-balance all the action of the firsts, and MUCH MORE – He always saves the best until last.

All Bible statements prove that the two deaths are absolutely *unlike*, and that the two are opposite and antagonistic. The Second Death undoes all the work of the first death in the same manner that the last Adam undid all the work of the first Adam. Not to nullify the purpose being wrought out by the plan of God in the firsts, but to bring a release from the firsts in a MUCH MORE manner of majesty and glory and power and scope of coverage, into the greater and glorious things of God.

Creation was made subject to vanity for a purpose! Sin was allowed for wise ends, but when those ends have been secured it will have to cease to exist. The purpose is not nullified, but the means whereby the purpose has been executed shall be done away. Discipline is a means to an end, but not an end in itself, for,

“afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness” (Hebrews 12:11).

The first Adam died to God and righteousness, and became alive unto sin. The last Adam died unto sin (Romans 6:10), and lives unto God, and so fulfills all righteousness. The first made all men sinners, the last makes all men righteous. The lives and the deaths of the two Adams are thus greatly contrasting the one to the other. The First Death was a transition from life to death, the Second Death is a transition from corruption to incorruption, from mortality to immortality – transformed from the carnal mind to the spiritual mind, which is life and peace, which transformation is wrought by a dying out to the one realm, to come alive to the higher realm. The Second Death is prepared to purge out and burn away sin and its results, and so doing cleanse God’s entire universe.

Death came as an enemy, the fruitage of an act of disobedience that turned man away from God and into the realm of carnality, minding self and flesh. Now God makes death overcome itself. It is by death that death is rendered powerless, and there arises an up-springing, a new life. It takes death to destroy death, and thus Christ did,

“taste death for every man ... that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Hebrews 2:9, 14-15).

NO MORE DEATH

At last shall be fulfilled the beautiful promise:

*“And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be **no more death**, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, **I make all things new**. And He said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful” (Revelation 21:3-5).*

Whatever we hold as the nature of the death state, may we let this truth sink deep into our hearts: **death is to be abolished**. The ringing declaration, “*The **last** enemy that shall be destroyed is death*” (I Corinthians 15:26), overthrows the whole structure of accepted, but unproved theology which shuts up the mass of the human race in “eternal death.” When the “last” enemy is abolished it is self-evident that none remains. Those wretched religionists who demand the endlessness of death, who argue for eternal torment in the Lake of Fire, the Second Death, do err, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God. The Lake of Fire **MUST** end because death and hell are cast into it, which is the Second Death, and in the end,

“there shall be N-O M-O-R-E D-E-A-T-H.”

No more death! No more first death. No more Second Death. No more of any kind of death. To say there is no more death is to say that there are no more sinners, for sinners are DEAD MEN, dead in trespasses and in sins. To say there is no more death is to say that God has not “burned up” all the wicked and left them dead, or in hell, for as long as any creature of God is in a state of death, death is not abolished. To say there is no more death is to say there is no more hell, for hell is “the realm of the dead.” To say there is no more death is to say there is no more a Lake of Fire, for the Lake of Fire *IS* the Second Death. To say there is no more death is to say there is no more sin, for “*the wages of sin is DEATH.*”

What a universe of truth is contained in three little words: NO MORE DEATH! This grand truth seems to be almost unknown in the Church systems. Although the very climax and fulfillment of all revelation, it has been eclipsed by human perversions. As a result the “God” of the popular Churches has lost the essential attributes of Deity. He is like the foolish man who started to build but could not finish. Man’s theology brings nothing to a conclusion. It attains no definite goal. Sin, suffering, and disobedience are never conquered. Death is never destroyed. Redemption is never fully secured. God is compelled to work an eternal miracle in order to maintain a never-ending eyesore in His creation, once so subject, so sinless, and so good. He has to eternally keep His great foot on the lid of hell; for if even one of the devils should get out there would be hell everywhere!

But death in all its forms shall be destroyed until it shall be said, “*There is no more death!*” Jesus is Conqueror! Then shall every creature in the universe bow and in glad chorus sing,

“O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (I Corinthians 15:55-57).

(A small abridgement taken from J. Preston Eby’s, *The Savior of the World* series)

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