

Will Those Who Die in Armageddon be Lost Forever?

This question has been asked by many of those who have been approached by zealous evangelists of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society (Jehovah's Witnesses). It has been taught that those who reject the teachings of that Society now, may go into second death when they die, especially if they die during Armageddon. But is this true? The Scriptures do describe a conflict between God and the nations of this world and call it Armageddon. There will be many who die. But to scare people into believing that they will be lost forever if they do not accept the teachings of the Jehovah's Witnesses is an error.

The purpose of this tract is to assure the earnest Bible student that the Scriptures do not support such claim. We will examine the subject of the "second death" and what the Scriptures teach regarding those who die in Armageddon. No Scripture ever teaches that salvation is gained by joining an organization, but rather that it is an individual matter, based on an individual's faith and his actions based on that faith.

THE SECOND DEATH

The term implies that it is a death unlike that which first fell upon mankind with the disobedience of Adam. All who die because of Adam's sin are promised an opportunity under the Kingdom of God to attain life.

"For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." (1 Cor. 15:22)

"For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." (Romans 5:19)

For over 6,000 years man has been dying because of Adam's original sin. As the prophet Jeremiah said:

"The fathers (Adam) have eaten a sour grape and the children's teeth are set on edge." (Jer. 31:29)

God's law of justice is "eye for eye, tooth for tooth," a perfect human life for a perfect human life. (Exodus 21:23-25) Adam sinned and the penalty was death. In his dying state, the best he could give his offspring was an imperfect and dying condition. In order for Adam to receive life again, another perfect life would have to die in his place, freeing him from the original penalty. This we have seen in Jesus' death. He was a ransom, or corresponding

price, for Adam. (1 Tim. 2:6) Note also Paul's comparison of Jesus as the last Adam in 1 Cor. 15:45-48.

Who can die the second death? A person must be freed from the first or Adamic death before he can be in danger of the second death. The time is coming when mankind will be freed from Adam's sins. Again reading from Jeremiah 31:30:

"In those days (under the Kingdom arrangement) they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children's teeth are set on edge. But every one shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eateth the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge."

Turning to Acts 3:22, 23 we read:

"A prophet (Christ) shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people."

God wills that all men be saved. (1 Tim. 2:5, 6) He will give them an opportunity such as never was available before to come to an understanding of God and his plan of salvation. So thorough will be that education of mankind that we are told in Jer. 31:34:

"And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

Unlike the past 6,000 years, Satan will be bound during the Kingdom of God (Rev. 20:1-4), and will deceive the nations no more. Man will be taught of the Lord, and only those who willfully oppose the opportunity—who will not hear that prophet—will not be written in the book of life. Man will have been freed from the first death through the resurrection (John 5:28, 29), and those failing to conform to the laws of righteousness and truth will be destroyed from among the people. This will be the second death.

Is anyone free from Adamic death now? The followers of Christ are in a unique position, for unlike the world of mankind which will benefit from the death of Jesus

during the Kingdom, they are able to accept that sacrifice on their behalf now through faith. They become justified, or made right in God's sight, by that faith. (Romans 5:1) If they present that justified life as a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1) and follow in Jesus' footsteps, they will no longer be considered under the Adamic curse of death. Their life and death are then considered as a sacrificial death. It becomes their duty to transform their thinking by the renewing of their minds, that they may prove what is good and acceptable and the perfect will of God. It is this class, who receive the benefits of Jesus' ransom now, that we read of in Hebrews 6:4-6:

"For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance: seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame."

If a Christian is successful in the transformation of character into the likeness of Christ, then he shall not be hurt of the second death, we are told by John the Revelator. (Rev. 2:11) Also, in Revelation 20:6, John said that on such the second death hath no power. But, should those who have once been enlightened and been privileged to come into communion with the Father reject such a standing, then they are rejecting the most honored gift available to man from the Creator and are no longer worthy of life. Note that this occurs after they have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit.

What is the second death? The term "second death" is a description of final destruction. Note again the Revelator's description in chapter 20, verses 14 and 15:

"And death and hell 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."

The book of Revelation is full of picture language. Death is spoken of as being cast into the lake of fire. Death is a condition. A condition could not be put into a literal lake or literal fire. Compare verse 10, where the devil is spoken of as being cast into the lake of fire. Paul says that Jesus will destroy the

devil (Hebrews 2:14), so the lake of fire actually pictures destruction. And if the lake of fire is also the second death, then the second death pictures destruction, from which there is no return.

The second death is only intended as a last resort for the willful sinners who absolutely refuse to conform to the righteous laws and standards which will be in force during the Kingdom.

What about those today who have been preached to and turn away? If they do not accept the truth now will they go into second death? Remember the words of Paul to the Hebrews in chapter 6, verses 4-6. The ones who cannot be renewed to repentance are those who have (1) become enlightened and (2) have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit. During the present age, only the followers of Christ are made partaker of the Holy Spirit, not the world.

In Mark 15:13 the Jews cried to Pilate, "Crucify Him!" Our Lord had preached to the Jews for three and one-half years. They heard Jesus, who gave the purest light and most logical presentation of truth possible. And yet, after they crucified our Lord, Peter says that they did this through ignorance. (Acts 3:13-17) Paul said that if they had known, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory. (1 Cor. 2:8) From the pens of two apostles, we read that the ones responsible for the death of Jesus were ignorant, or did not know what they were really doing, so they could not qualify for the second death penalty. (They must first be enlightened and then willfully oppose it.) In spite of their taking part in crucifying our Lord, these rulers are promised a share in the resurrection, with an opportunity to turn from their sins and repent.

"And every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him..." (Rev. 1:7)

Jesus realized that the Jews would be given an opportunity in the kingdom even though they had killed the prophets and stoned them which were sent to them. Even though they were unreceptive at that time, the time would come when they too would say, *"Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."* (Matthew 23:37-39)

Many today receive not the Gospel because Satan has blinded their minds. (2 Cor. 4:4) Fortunately, during the 1,000-year kingdom of Christ, Satan will be "bound" and man will come to an understanding of God's will for him — just as the Apostle Paul was made to see the error of his ways in persecuting the Church — only to become one of the most zealous servants of God. God will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

(1 Tim. 2:4) During the millennium a way of holiness will be introduced. It will be for the sinner, but it will lead to holiness and perfection, not to death. (Isa. 35:8-10) Songs and everlasting joy will be upon the heads of the sinners who will be walking towards righteousness. They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

ARMAGEDDON

What about those destroyed during Armageddon? Since they battle against the Lord, will they be destroyed forever?

Armageddon is used to describe the conflict between God and the kingdoms of this present world or social order. The kingdoms which are built upon selfishness and greed will be removed, never again to be allowed to rule over man. (Daniel 2:44) Note the words of the prophet Zephaniah:

"Therefore, wait ye upon me, saith the Lord, until the day that I rise up to the prey: for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger: for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy. For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent." (Zeph. 3:8,9)

Here the prophet describes the destruction of the nations. Note the symbol of fire which is used to show how thorough the destruction will be. Once the people see that the governments which have ruled over them were unable to solve man's problems (pollution, war, taxes, crime, disease, poverty, selfishness and death), they will rejoice to see the righteous kingdom of God established out of this great crisis. It will be the desire of all nations. (Haggai 2:7) What better way to quench the thirst of man than with the refreshing truth, a pure language! The ones who will receive this pure language will be those who have not had it before, or could not appreciate it under previous circumstances. But, with Satan's dominion crushed and out of the way, their eyes will become enlightened with the plan of God.

They will see the judgment on the nations and will benefit from it, for *"when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness."* (Isaiah 26:9)

The prophet Joel describes the destruction of the day of the Lord. Reading from chapter 2, verses 28 and 29:

"And it shall come to pass afterward (after this destruction), that I will pour out

my spirit upon all flesh..."

This spirit will be the same spirit which is poured out upon the Church now, during the days when this destruction is to take place (see verse 29). The Lord's spirit is promised to be poured out on all of mankind after this day of Armageddon. Only then will they be accountable for their sins. Only then will they be liable to fall into second death if they willfully oppose the Lord's favor.

Man is impatient and judges quickly. The Lord is willing to give a certain amount of time before making a final decision. He is willing to give a person a full, fair opportunity under the most favorable circumstances, so that in the end none will be able to criticize Him for not giving everyone a chance. If it were true that a person's eternal destiny could be decided in a brief discussion; and if it is true that those who never hear of the Lord will be taught of him during the kingdom — wouldn't it be better to leave the instruction and destiny of individuals in the Lord's hands? The Lord reads the heart, while man's judgment is based on the outward appearance. This does not mean we should stop telling others the good news — and the Lord's plan for mankind's future IS good news — but it should encourage us to realize that not everyone will accept the Lord now. Everyone will have an opportunity later, as we have seen. Note the attitude of Jesus in John 12:47, 48:

"And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not (now) to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."

Because the Lord's spirit has not yet been poured out on the world in general, they are not fully accountable for the truth they reject. Only during the Millennium will they thus be held accountable, in the "last day" or age. Jesus also taught that the scribes and Pharisees of his day would be given an opportunity in the kingdom of God to repent of their ways; even though it would be difficult for them, since they were so blind when he was with them.

If this thought of a full, fair opportunity for everyone appeals to you as worthy of a God of justice and love, we'd like to send you a textbook for Bible study that will give you further scriptural proof for this and other important subjects.

Examine whatever anyone tells you, to find out if it is supported by the Scriptures, and *"Hold fast that which is good."*