

ALL THINGS IN CHRIST

In all wisdom and prudence making known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Him the plan for the fullness of the times

**TO HEAD UP THE ALL THINGS IN THE CHRIST,
the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth, in Him...**

(Ephesians 1:8b-10)

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Article #61

The Second Death, the Lake of Fire

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(25) For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. (26) The last enemy that will be abolished is death. (1 Corinthians 15:25-26 NASB)

Then death and the unseen [hades] were cast [thrown] into the lake of fire. This is the second death—the lake of fire. (Revelation 20:14 CV [YLT; NASB])

For some time now, I have been seeking the Lord in scripture for more understanding of the lake of fire. I have written on the subject before but, of late, have had some questions, particularly about the second death, which is the lake of fire.

To begin, death, in a very general sense, is the cessation of anything, most notably of life but also of things seen (objects, works) and unseen (hopes, dreams, visions, etc.). So, the second death is the cessation of something, but what does this mean?

It is obvious that the distinguishing feature of this death is that it is a second death and, apparently by inference, is the last death as well. So, why is this called the *second* death and not the last death? There is no direct use of the term *first* death in scripture, and the term *second* death is used only four times, all in the book of Revelation. By inference, if there is a second, there must be a first. On one level, it seems obvious enough that the first death must refer to the death and hades of Revelation 20:14. But, if this is the only explanation, why not simply use the same language of 1 Corinthians 15:26 and declare that death and hades are abolished? Why refer to this as the second, unless it has some specific meaning?

In pursuit of answers to these and many other questions, I believe the Lord has given me understanding as to the signification of the second death and, consequently, the lake of fire that is quite simple and yet profound. Here it is:

The first death refers to the first Adam's death. ***In Adam all die.*** The second death refers to the last Adam's (Second Man's) death. ***One (Christ) died for all, consequently all died.*** Notice that both men brought a form of death to ALL. However, the difference between the two deaths is that the first death produces nothing beyond death; it is life unto death. But, the second death produces life; it is death unto life. ***In Christ all will be made alive.*** Simply, Adam's entire race experiences two deaths, one in Adam and one in Christ. However, only in Christ is there life. The lake of fire and brimstone signifies the spiritual fire of God that purifies by consuming (bringing into death) the old man (carnal flesh) and his works and bringing forth the new man.

The second death and the lake of fire are unequivocally and absolutely essential for every single person born of Adam's race, without exception. Regardless of what label (i.e., saved or lost) one puts on people, all will experientially identify with the second death, and all will pass through the consuming fire of God. The difference among men is in timing, severity, and how long the fiery purification will last. The question is who will be hurt by the second death and who will not. The other major difference is that the conquerors of our present age will come into sonship as first fruits of the church and the rest of mankind, and they will reign with Christ and judge the world and the messengers (angels). However, the glory and absolute victory of Christ's death and resurrection demands that the time will come when there will no longer be any outside the will of God, for all will bow and all will confess, even those who have been angry at the Lord. A day is coming when there will be no unbelievers.

(22) "Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other. (23) "I have sworn by Myself, the word has gone forth from My mouth in righteousness and will not turn back, that to Me every knee will bow, every tongue will swear allegiance. (24) "They will say of Me, 'Only in the LORD are righteousness and strength.' Men will come to Him, and all who were angry at Him will be put to shame. (Isaiah 45:22-24 NASB)

(9) For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, (10) so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, (11) and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:9-11 NASB)

The word *bow* means that one willingly and reverently prostrates himself before the Lord. It does not mean one will be forced to his knees by the angels, as some teach. Besides, **no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit** (1 Corinthians 12:3).

All are judged, whether through what is called *the bema*, the Judgment Seat of God and of Christ, or the Great White Throne Judgment. Judgment brings out the truth. **Jesus is the Truth** (John 14:6), and **the truth will make you free** (John 8:32). **"So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed"** (John 8:36). The goal of judgment is to take away the first order of sin and death in order to establish the second (Hebrews 10:9) so that God the Father may be all in all (1 Corinthians 15:28). Behold, He is making all things new (Revelation 21:5). This is the ultimate purpose of God. All will be free indeed, free from sin and death; and all will come into the glorious liberty of the life of the Son, for it is the Father's good pleasure to bring many sons unto glory and to fill His whole creation with the glory of the Lord. This is truly good news!

Before proceeding further, it is suggested that if you have not read the following articles that you do so or, at least, refer to them when referenced in what follows. These provide details that will not be repeated in this article but are essential for further understanding of this topic.

<http://www.kingdomandglory.com/art/art56.html> (*Man's [Free] Will vs. God's Will*)
<http://www.kingdomandglory.com/art/art57.html> (*Eternal or Eonian?*)
<http://www.kingdomandglory.com/art/art58.html> (*Judgment of All by God is Love*)
<http://www.kingdomandglory.com/art/art59.html> (*Hell-A Pagan Concept*)
<http://www.kingdomandglory.com/art/art60.html> (*Wrath and Anger of God*)

Two Men—Two Deaths

According to Paul's gospel, there are only two men in view, and all matters related to death are explained through these two men, both of whom experienced deaths with profound impact on all mankind, none excluded. They are **the first Adam, the first man from the earth, and the last Adam, the Second Man from heaven** who is the Christ, the Son of Man and the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ.

So also it is written, "The first MAN, Adam, BECAME A LIVING SOUL." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. (1 Corinthians 15:45 NASB)

The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven. (1 Corinthians 15:47 NASB)

Mankind is divided according to these two men—those who are in the first Adam (soul-man) and those who are in the last Adam (spirit-man); or stated another way, those who are in the first man and those who are in the Second Man; or using Paul's terminology, those who are *in Adam* and those who are *in Christ*. Interestingly, Christ is referred to as the last Adam but not as the second Adam. The good news is that all mankind are destined to be alive in Christ.

For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. (1 Corinthians 15:22 NASB)

In his Romans epistle, Paul contrasts the work of these two men that is summed up in two words—death and life. Notice his use of the words *one* and *many* as he unfolds the justification of life to all men (mankind, men and women).

(17) For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ. (18) So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men. (19) For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous. (Romans 5:19 NASB)

The many are included in or identified with one of two men. Actually, all men (mankind), as the many, start in the first one (first Adam), **who is a type of Him who was to come** (Romans 5:14), and all mankind, as the many, end in the second One (last Adam, Jesus Christ). Paul presents a rather simple equation: **Adam + the many = ALL; Christ + the many = ALL**. Another way to look at this is that the two Adams stand apart from the rest of mankind that are called *the many*. By the way, Paul's use of the expression *the many* came from Isaiah 53:11: **the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, He will bear their iniquities**. Some argue that the use of the word *many* rules out the word *all*, but Paul disproves this by clearly linking *the many* to *all men*. The use of the word *many* is used to express that there will be a vast number of men and women that will be brought into life. It could be likened to **the great multitude which no one could count** (Revelation 7:9). Consequently, Isaiah and Paul saw the many, not the few. Besides, *the many* were made sinners, and *all* have sinned (Romans 3:23).

We need to be very clear that both the condemnation and the justification Paul speaks of came through death—Adam's death when he transgressed God's one command and Christ's death when He was crucified on a cross for the sin of the world. The one transgression led to death coming upon the entire human race from which no man is excluded, for all die. The one act of righteousness that came through death led to life for the entire human race from which no man is excluded, for all men will be drawn or dragged into life by a life-giving spirit.

"And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw [literally, drag] all men to Myself." (John 12:32 NASB)

Based on Paul's comparison of the two men, **the first death speaks of the first Adam's death and the second death speaks of the last Adam's (Christ's) death.** As all the affairs (history) of mankind are summed up in two men, so are the two deaths, and, by the consummation of the eons (ages), everyone born of Adam's race will have been brought through both deaths into life, **each in his own order** (1 Corinthians 15:23). Technically, death in all its forms has already been dealt a death blow, so to speak, but it is being worked out in our present eon and will continue to be worked out throughout the eons to come. Ultimately, the condemnation to *all* men will fully yield to the glory of the justification of life to *all* men. **The last enemy that will be abolished is death** (1 Corinthians 15:26), for **there will no longer be death** (Revelation 21:4).

Now, let us consider the two deaths.

The First Death

(16) The LORD God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; (17) but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die." (Genesis 2:16-17 NASB)

Without doubt, there are many interpretations of what happened in the garden, specifically what changes came upon Adam and Eve and what they passed onto their progeny. In some respects, the theological debates over Genesis are moot, for all one needs to do is look at the history of mankind to get a pretty good picture of man's condition that had its genesis in our ancient parents. Sin and death pretty much sum up the history of mankind, even in the midst of all that we would call *good*.

There were two trees in the garden, one that gave life and one that gave death. In the case of Adam and his race, the key to our understanding is discovered in these two trees, the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which could be called the tree of death. The only antidote for the tree of knowledge is the tree of life, for without the tree of life even the knowledge of good is death. Adam partook of the "death" tree and God barred his way to the "life" tree; consequently, death in all its forms of cessation came upon Adam's being (consequently, his entire race). We could say that sin infected man much like a disease and the result or conclusion of this infection is death. Paul gives us the best explanation of what occurred. Although he does not call it such, consider what Paul has to say about the first death. For the inquiring mind, two renderings of Romans 5:12 are presented to provide further depth to the matter.

Therefore, even as through one man sin entered into the world, and through sin death, and thus death passed into all mankind, on which all sinned.... (Romans 5:12 CV)

Because of this (Therefore; That is why), **just as through one man** (through the act or agency of one person) **The Sin** (or: the failure; the miss of the target; the deviation from the goal) **entered into the ordered System** (the world of religion, culture, economy and government; or both religious and secular society; or the cosmos) **and through The Sin** (failure; the mistake; the miss of target; the deviation) **The death also, in this way The Death thus also passed through in all directions** (or: came through the midst causing division and duality; went throughout) **into all mankind** (or: into the midst of humanity; or to all the people), **upon which [situation and condition], all sinned** (or: everyone fails and misses the target, falls short of the goal, makes mistakes and deviates from the goal). (Romans 5:12 Jonathan Mitchell's NT)

For as in Adam all die.... (1 Corinthians 15:22 NASB)

By the way, 1 Corinthians 15 is one of the great chapters of all scripture as Paul defends the bodily resurrection of Christ, and, consequently, the bodily resurrection of all men, each in his own order. Simply, Paul defends the glory of putting off mortality (corruption, death) and putting on immortality (incorruption, life beyond death).

It is commonly taught that Adam passed sin onto his progeny, but this is not entirely accurate. What he introduced into mankind is sin, but what he passed onto mankind is death. Sin came first, for **the wages of sin is death** (Romans 6:23). The *Concordant Literal New Testament* (CV) cited above attempts to make this distinction with the awkward-sounding phrase *death passed through into all mankind, on which all sinned*. On Adam's side, it is sin then death, but on our side, it is death (mortality) then sin.

This explains why a fetus can die in the womb or a newborn can die immediately in the birth canal or upon birth, having committed no sin. Unfortunately, it does not take very long for the sin nature to surface, for as Paul tells us, **sin reigns in death** (Romans 5:21), meaning that because we are mortal, we sin. In a sense, we have no choice; it is programmed into our DNA because we live in mortal bodies and this is where sin resides, **for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God** (Romans 3:23).

Adam introduced sin into his race (not into God's entire creation) and death followed. Adam's race has inherited death and in death all sin. It is a proven fact that *in Adam all die*, and all humans born on planet earth are born in Adam with the exception of Jesus Christ, the last Adam, who is of an entirely different realm or order.

In other words, all born of Adam's race, without exception, are born mortal; that is, all are born into the process of dying that culminates in the body going into the grave and returning to the dust (soil) of the earth, the soul or experiences of the body going to the unseen or sheol-hades where the dead do not know anything (Ecclesiastes 9:5), and the spirit (breath) of man returning to God (Ecclesiastes 12:7).

Now, some argue that the death Adam experienced was not of the body but entirely of the spirit, meaning it was a *spiritual* death. Part of their premise is based on the two phrases *in the day* and *you will surely die*. As their argument goes, Adam was formed from the soil of the earth as a mortal and was destined to die, regardless of his one transgression. These same ones generally dispute the idea that the phrase *for in the day* refers to a thousand-year day. They insist the expression refers only to the actual day that Adam partook of the tree, and it is all about spiritual death; it has nothing to do with physical death or any other type of death, for that matter. In other words, they exclude other forms of death.

As an aside, it is unfortunate how so much theology is based on mutual exclusiveness; that is, if one thing (or, condition) exists, then another thing must be excluded. However, there seems to be far more inclusiveness in scripture than exclusiveness. As another aside, if you are interested in a discussion of *in the day*, see article #45, *Six Days and then the Seventh* (April 2012). <http://www.kingdomandglory.com/art/art45.html>

Two literal translations of the same verse help to explain the death that came upon Adam and his race.

... and of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou dost not eat of it, for in the day of thine eating of it—dying thou dost die.' (Genesis 2:17 YLT)

Yet from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you are not to be eating from it, for in the day you eat from it, to die shall you be dying. (Genesis 2:17 CV)

Another way to state this warning is "you are dying to die," meaning that dying is the process and to die is the consummation of the process; if you will, the final act of the process is the grave. To be sure, the spirit of Adam was affected in that day, but it did not die in that day, as in cease to exist (annihilation). If it had died, Adam would have died physically as well. When the Lord God formed Adam out of the soil of the earth (i.e., formed a body), He breathed into his nostrils the breath or spirit of life and he became a living soul (Genesis 2:9). The spirit is what gives life; take away the spirit and life ceases. As James 2:26 says: **The body without the spirit is dead.** To nail down the point, so to speak, the breath of life is not restricted to man.

(21) All flesh that moved on the earth perished, birds and cattle and beasts and every swarming thing that swarms upon the earth, and all mankind; (22) of all that was on the dry land, all in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life, died. (Genesis 7:21-22 NASB)

However, this does raise the question of whether death is restricted entirely to the body. Again, turning to Paul, who reminds us that man is comprised of spirit, soul, and body (1 Thessalonians 5:23), the answer is no; death is mutually inclusive and involves all three components of man—spirit, soul, and body. The body degrades and eventually goes into the grave with no inherent ability to get out; the soul is self-centered, fixated on "I and me" and continually misses the mark (sins) by pleasing the flesh (the carnal, temporal body) as it tries to gain the world (Mark 8:36); and the spirit of man is isolated from God's spirit so he knows nothing of a God-centered spiritual life, for the spirit of God is not within him. In this sense, we could say

that the spirit is dead to God but not to man. History proves it and scripture, especially Paul's epistles, explain it.

(6) For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, (7) because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, (8) and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. (9) However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. (10) If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness. (Romans 8:6-10 NASB)

Paul makes the point for us that death is multifaceted, having affected more than the body, as evidenced by the mind set on the flesh (temporal, mortal body) is death. In other words, when man caters to, even worships, his carnal or bodily desires, it produces death. A mind set on the flesh is obsessed with all that gives pleasure to the senses of the body.

The wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23), and Adam brought all of mankind into sin and death; consequently, everything associated with the first Adam is death. Mankind did not enter the realm of life as typified by the tree of life; mankind entered into the realm of death and everything associated with this realm is death. The remedy to this death is to come into the death of Christ that rises out of the grave into the realm of life and receive the indwelling of the spirit of God and of Christ, that is, **Christ in you** (Colossians 1:27). Without the spirit of God, the spirit of man has no meaningful relationship with God, for he does not know how to please God. However, more than this, man has a groan within that cries out to God for deliverance from the toil of life on earth.

Why Have You Forsaken Me?

(1) My God, my God, why have You forsaken me? Far from my deliverance are the words of my groaning. (2) O my God, I cry by day, but You do not answer; and by night, but I have no rest. (Psalm 22:1-2 NASB)

Truly, when David first penned these words, his soul was in deep anguish as he felt abandoned by his God. He cried out, but there was no answer to satisfy his groaning; there was no rest from his forsakenness. He was all alone in his darkness. Let us be clear that this was David's cry; it belonged to him well before the King of kings arrived on the scene.

But then, Jesus as the last Adam, the Second Man, the Christ, even the King arrived, and on the cross, as He looked out on His creation and the men and women before Him, He quoted David's psalm and cried out, taking these words as His own cry of anguish.

About the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "ELI, ELI, LAMA SABACHTHANI?" that is, "MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?" (Matthew 27:46 NASB)

We might think that the Son of God cried out these infamous words for Himself, but we must remember that He is also the Son of Man. This cry echoed back into time to the garden when the first Adam knew a dramatic change had taken place. Adam and his race were banished from partaking of the tree of life, and they were cast out onto a cursed ground that they had to work with the sweat of their faces if they were to eat. Their world became one of thorns and thistles, with death all around. Everything returned to the soil or ground of the earth!

(17) Then to Adam He said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat from it'; Cursed is the ground because of you; In toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. (18) "Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; and you will eat the plants of the field; (19) by the sweat of your face you will eat bread, till you return to the ground, because from it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return." (Genesis 3:17-19 NASB)

Surely, at times, this curse was too much to bear, and the first Adam must have cried out as the last Adam cried out. Why? Why have you made it so hard for us to live? And, considering the history of man, this cry has gone forth countless times from the anguished souls of men and women who have found life so hard, so full of toil and sweat, so full of death and sin.

Jesus, who took on sinful flesh as the last Adam, cried out on the cross for all of humanity that has been under the curse brought on by the first Adam. It has been the 6000-yearlong cry of mankind forsaken by their God. There is no rest from their toil, no rest from the effects of sin and death. However, the good news is that there is a Sabbath rest for the people of God, a seventh day when all the toil ceases (Hebrews 4). This day is in Christ. This is a message all unto itself, so we must leave it and press on with the matter of sin and death. We need to be reminded that although the problem of sin and death has been settled in Christ, neither sin nor death has been abolished as of today. We know it will be one day, for the last enemy death is destined to be abolished because Jesus has overcome death.

Old Man, Sinful Flesh

Mankind continues to suffer as the first Adam. The epistles use various terms and means to describe this realm of death that permeates all of the first Adam. Two terms are *the old man* (Romans 6:6; Ephesians 4:22; Colossian 3:9) and *the flesh*. Paul saw sin dwelling in him and nothing good dwelling in his flesh (Romans 7:17-18). Jesus came **in the likeness of sinful flesh**, and, **as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh** (Romans 8:3). As cited already, **the mind set on the flesh is death; the flesh is hostile toward God; and the flesh cannot please God. The body is dead because of sin!** Much more clarity is given by Paul in his epistle to the Galatians as he lists the symptoms of the flesh. We could say that he is describing a disease. The flesh sets its desires against the Spirit; consequently, there is a present danger for all.

(16) But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. (17) For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. (18) But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. (19) Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, (20) idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy,

outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, (21) envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. (Galatians 5:16-21 NASB)

Another symptom of the flesh is described through the word *lust*, which means "longing." We could say that the flesh longs for something other than God and His life; it longs for that which can only bring forth death.

(14) But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. (15) Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. (James 1:14-15 NASB)

You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. (James 4:2 NASB)

For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. (2 Peter 1:4 NASB)

(9) Then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment, (10) and especially those who indulge the flesh in its corrupt desires and despise authority. Daring, self-willed, they do not tremble when they revile angelic majesties.... (2 Peter 2:9-10 NASB)

For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. (1 John 2:16 NASB)

The flesh is also described or inferred through the word *carnal*, meaning worldly, not spiritual.

And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. (1 Corinthians 3:1 KJV)

(1) And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. (2) I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. (3) For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? (4) For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal? (1 Corinthians 3:1-4 KJV)

If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things? (1 Corinthians 9:11 KJV)

There are various teachings about all these verses, especially regarding Paul's understanding of the law and the flesh; however, these should serve to highlight the nature of the old man and the symptoms of death that permeate this man. It should not be lost on us that there is a tension between these two natures, between the realm of death for the old man and the realm

of life for the new man who has an earnest of the spirit of God dwelling within. For this reason, Paul exhorts us to put off or lay aside the old man or old self and put on the new man or new self (Ephesians 4:22-24; Colossians 3:9-10). In other words, come out of death. **"Unbind him, and let him go"** (John 11:44).

Let us move onto the second death, for here we discover the death of all that is associated with the first death, none excluded. All that is of sin and related to sin is dealt with in the second death, which is as inclusive as the first death is inclusive.

The Second Death

The last Adam or the Second Man also experienced death but with an entirely different result. The first Adam's death produced death that permeated all realms of man's constitution, but the last Adam's death rectifies all that the first Adam brought upon his race and produces life in all realms of man's constitution, as well as in God's entire creation. The death of the last Adam leads to life for all in all realms—spirit, soul, and body.

Paul does not use the term *second death*, but he explains it for us.

(14) For the love of Christ constrains us, having judged this, that if One died for all, then all died; (15) and He died for all, that the living ones may live no more to themselves, but to the One having died for them and having been raised. (16) So as we now know no one according to flesh, but even if we have known Christ according to flesh, yet now we no longer know Him so. (17) So that if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new! (18) And all things are from God, the One having reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and having given to us the ministry of reconciliation, (19) as, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not charging their deviations [transgressions] to them, and having put the Word of reconciliation in us. (2 Corinthians 5:14-19 LITV [NASB])

This particular translation uses an *if...then* clause: If Christ died for all, then all died. It is a clausal relationship: If we agree that Christ died for all, which, according to scripture, He did, then all died. In other words, **He died for all, therefore all died**. Don't read over this statement too quickly, for this is paramount in our understanding of the good news. **Therefore or consequently or as a result of Christ's death, ALL DIED as well!** The fact of the matter is that when Christ died, He took all men and women with Him into the grave, none excluded. All of mankind was rendered dead! Let this sink in!

Obviously, all of mankind did not literally die physically in that day. But in the eyes of God, the entirety of the human race that was dead in transgressions has been brought into Christ's death to die to the transgressions (i.e., sin). We could say that His death was imputed to all so that all identify with Him in death. Or, to use a slang expression: **The fix is in!**

This means that Christ brought the *first* Adam's death into His death. This is the death of death, the second death.

All are brought into the *last* Adam's death so that all may rise up out of the grave into life as a new creation; this is the life of the NEW MAN or the Second Man. All are destined for resurrection and/or transfiguration, not all at the same time but all eventually.

As an aside, some commentators see Paul's reference to the flesh in the above verses as relating to God no longer recognizing anyone according to their birthright, bloodline, or heritage, specifically that of the Jew. This is an undeniable fact and one that Paul clearly makes throughout his writings, including in these particular verses. However, this does not exclude the much larger picture of the good news that death has been swallowed up in life and that there is a new creation in Christ. All things have become new in Christ, and this newness comes through His death to all that is of the first Adam and through His resurrection to life for all. The good news is that God is not charging the world's transgressions against it; He reconciled Himself or made peace with the world, and this is all because of the One who died, died for all; consequently, all died with Him. How can God hold transgressions against a dead man? What would this gain? He is dead.

The wages of sin is death, and the penalty has been paid in full by the ultimate and absolute death of the Son of God and the identification of all of mankind with this death. This is the second death.

Consider this; if all of mankind was brought into Christ's death by God Himself, meaning man had no choice in the matter, then how does man come out of this death on his own? Simply, we have nothing within us to give us life again. While we were still in our sinful carnal nature (old man), Christ came and took this old ungodly life to the grave. **For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly** (Romans 5:6). Christians generally read this verse and see it applying only to those who somehow figure out how to save themselves. Paul made no such assertion. All of mankind was in a state of ungodliness and helplessness when Christ, at the foreordained and appointed time (Acts 2:23), died for the sin of the whole world as the Savior of the world.

The only way into life is through the One who brought all of us into His death in the first place. We cannot do it, no matter how much so-called *free will* we think we have. Only God can do it. But God! (John 1:12-13; Romans 9:16) If we are dead by God's own doing, then only God can give us life. The good news is that God has done it, is doing it, and will continue to do it until the consummation of the ages, for God **wills all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth** (1 Timothy 2:4).

Some might argue that this is not so based on Paul's own words in 2 Corinthians 5:15: **He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.** Isn't Paul restricting the *all that died* to those who exercise their free will to believe? Doesn't *the all* refer to only believers? No! Emphatically, no! One has to read this into Paul's gospel. **For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men** (Titus 2:11). Paul **fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers** (1 Timothy 4:10). The word *especially* does not mean "exclusively." It is simply Paul's way of singling out the believers of this age, but it does not follow that he is excluding any of mankind from coming into life. Keep in mind that, like all writers, Paul had a specific audience in

mind that he sought to encourage and exhort. The fact is that Paul indicates each will come in according to his own rank or order: **In Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own order** (1 Corinthians 15:22-23). So that we are not tempted to think 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 stands alone in Paul's gospel, consider what he has to say in his Roman's epistle.

(8) Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, (9) knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. (10) For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. (11) Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. (Romans 6:8-11 NASB)

The second death has won the victory for all mankind, for Christ overcame or conquered death. This is what is meant by *never to die again* and *death no longer is master over Him*. He also died to sin once for all, and He now lives to God. Death and sin have been conquered by Christ through His death as proven and declared by His resurrection (Romans 1:3-4). It is a fact that not only was death dealt with in Christ's death, but so was sin. He died to sin once for all. His death was a death sentence on sin as well as on death. He now has **the keys of death and of hades** (Revelation 1:18).

Death is swallowed up in victory. The sting of death is sin. O death, where is your sting? Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:54-57).

JESUS HAS FIXED IT ALL! This is the good news of Christ. We are to stand in this truth and withstand in it. We are to walk in this truth and to glory in it. God is love has undone all that was wrought by the first Adam. He has fixed the entirety of mankind and creation in His beloved Son.

God is love. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world. (1 John 4:8, 10; 2:2)

The fix is in for those of the whole world, not just us. It is presently being worked out. On our part, we are to reckon ourselves crucified with Christ, meaning we are dead men as far as our old man (old self, old "I") is concerned. This was Paul's testimony.

I am crucified with Christ, and no longer live, I, but Christ lives in me; but in that I now live in flesh, I live by faith, the faith of the Son of God, who has loved me and given himself for me. (Galatians 2:20 DNT)

This translation properly notes that Paul's faith was the faith *of* the Son, meaning Paul had no faith of his own. He was given the faith of Jesus which then became his faith. His personal testimony supports this: **But the grace of our Lord surpassingly over-abounded with faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus** (1 Timothy 1:14 DNT).

There is a present-day identification with Christ's death, the second death. The "I" used by Paul refers to the self-centered "I" of the old man, the sinful flesh. Stated another way: My old "I" that thrived in the first death no longer lives; I live by the new "I," the new life that came out of the second death and thrives in the life of Christ, the Second Man.

Paul not only saw himself crucified but also all who believe as well. You have died! This also connects back to Romans 6:8: **if we have died with Christ**. In Colossians, Paul makes it more emphatic: **you have died**. As such, we are to consider the members of our body that sin as dead to the outworking of this sin. Again, lay aside the old self with its practices (Colossian 3:9).

(3) For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. (4) When Christ, who is our life [the new / life], is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory. (5) Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. (Colossians 3:3-5 NASB) [added by writer]

As an aside, it seems that some commentators separate this objective truth of being crucified with Christ from the working out of this truth (i.e., putting off the old man, dying to self, taking up our cross, etc.), as if there is an additional death in play. I see no need to divide it this way based on the simple concept of two men, two deaths. The objective truth and the experiential working out of this truth are mutually inclusive. That we must work out this truth does not weaken the power of it; it glorifies it, for we come to see that it must be all of Christ or nothing. We come to see our total and absolute need for Christ who is our salvation. His grace is sufficient in the working out of this truth. Again, Paul, who had a weakness in his flesh, gives us the example to follow.

And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. (2 Corinthians 12:9 NASB)

As to the matter of the all-sufficiency of grace, Paul links the grace of God to working out this objective truth.

(11) For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, (12) instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, (13) looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, (14) who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds. (Titus 2:11-14 NASB)

Grace brings salvation to all men; men do not go looking for it, God brings it. This one fact alone takes all the pressure off any of us trying to save ourselves even after we know we are saved. Too many Christians live in fear that they might lose their salvation or make God so mad that He will toast them along with all the other billions of lost souls who are in hell or going to hell. What a lie! Relax; God's grace has saved you, is saving you, and will save you. And, guess what? He is going to do it for all as well, none excluded! No man will boast in himself; all will boast in the Lord.

The good news is that grace is not a one-time phenomenon. In verse 12, the word *instructing* is better translated *chastening*, meaning the grace of God chastens us to live sensibly. Grace has a continuing purpose in our lives that pertains to us walking in a manner pleasing to God. If grace given to save us is a free gift, do you not think grace given to chasten us unto a godly life is not a free gift as well?

Chastening is required because there is often a tension within us that ebbs and flows as a battle is fought between our flesh and the Spirit. Given this tension, our experience sometimes lags behind the objective truth. However, we are to press on toward the goal (Philippians 3:14) and, as we do, hold it by faith as we work out our salvation as God works in us to will and to work for His good pleasure (Philippians 2:12-13). The good news is that in time the Spirit rules and by grace the flesh is subdued. **In Christ there is only victory, there is no such thing as defeat.** Then, one day, we will be resurrected and/or transfigured into the likeness of Christ with immortal, glorified, spiritual, celestial bodies that embody and can transcend both the physical (seen) and spiritual (unseen) realms. **Just as we have borne the image of the earthly, we will also bear the image of the heavenly** (celestial) (1 Corinthians 15:49).

Conformed to His Death

Now, this leads to being conformed to His death. Paul came to see the way to deal with the old man within us is to experientially identify with Christ's death, not simply in word but in a life that dies to self; again, it is the crucified life. We might be tempted to think we have to work up a head of steam, so to speak, in order to do this, but not so. It can only come by experientially knowing Him and the power of His resurrection, knowing the power of His life.

(10) That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; (11) in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. (Philippians 3:10-11 NASB)

Paul sought to be included in the out-resurrection from among the dead, which is the first resurrection (Revelation 20:4-6). But his way was by being conformed to the death of his Master, even through fellowship with His sufferings. Paul sought to be conformed to the second death, the very death of Christ. Mind you, Paul was not stating he could die for the sin of the world, which is impossible for anyone of Adam's race to do. He sought to die to all of himself, that is, to his own will, which is essential for all to do. His heart was like his Lord's heart: **Not My will, but Yours be done** (Luke 22:42). This was a complete dying to self, all in accord with the words of Jesus.

(24) Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. (25) "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. (26) "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? (Matthew 16:24-26 NASB)

(23) And He was saying to them all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. (24) "For whoever wishes to save his life

will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it. (25) "For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself? (Luke 9:23-25 NASB)

On this side of the cross, taking up our cross is a death to the old man. Taking up our cross is declaring that I have been crucified with Christ. My old way was death. My new way is life. Let's add another word from Paul.

(14) But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. (15) For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. (Galatians 6:14-15 NASB)

We are a new creation, and our old creation must die by identifying with the second death of Christ, which includes a death to the world system, the spirit of the world (1 Corinthians 2:12).

Paul (along with the other apostles) is an example of one dying to self and, as such, being experientially conformed to His death, which, as I believe the Lord has shown me, is the second death. Paul declared that he died daily (1 Corinthians 15:31) for the good news to go forth, and his testimony bore this out. For example, read 2 Corinthians 6:3-10 and 11:23-29. If this isn't enough, then read of his trials in Acts.

All of us who are going on in the Lord in this age are called to walk in this same path. We are to die to a self-centered life set on pleasing the flesh. We are to lay down our lives for one another as Christ laid down His life for all. Love demands it! We are to put off the old that loves self and put on the new that loves all mankind. As we do, we become more and more like Christ and are truly conquerors or overcomers who are **walking in a manner worthy of the God who invites us into His own kingdom and glory** (1 Thessalonians 2:12).

Is it an easy walk? Is death easy? No! It is a walk of **suffering** (Romans 8:17-18), **fiery trials** (James 1:2; 1 Peter 4:12), **tribulations** (Acts 14:22), **persecutions** (Matthew 5:10; 13:21; Acts 8:1; Romans 8:35; 2 Timothy 3:12), **discipline** (Hebrews 12:1-11), **striving and contending** (Luke 13:24; 1 Timothy 4:10; Jude 1:3), and **learning obedience** as Jesus learned obedience (Hebrews 5:8). The good news is that those of us in this age who are granted the grace and faith of Jesus to believe have the opportunity to experience the second death by the same grace and faith while we continue to occupy *the body of this death* (Romans 7:24). If we do, we will not be hurt by the second death of the Great White Throne Judgment. **Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord** (Romans 7:25)!

(10) 'Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for 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 [conquers] will not be hurt by the second death.' (Revelation 2:10-11 NASB [ESV])

Notice that it does not state the conquerors will not experience or pass through the second death; it states they *will not be hurt by it*. Why? Because they will have been conformed to the image of Christ and like the three Hebrews walking through the furnace of fire with the Lord by their side, they will be untouched by the fire of the second death.

Men will experience the second death either now in this age while occupying mortal bodies or later as a result of the Great White Throne Judgment and the final resurrection of the dead. This is not a physical death; it is the death of sin, or we could say, the death of the old sin nature, the carnal nature (flesh) of the first Adam, the death of being a slave to sin. Jesus tells us that this death is related to the soul-life.

For whosoever may be wanting to save his soul shall be destroying it. Yet whoever should be destroying his soul on My account shall be finding it. (Matthew 16:25 CV)

Christ is in us and we are in Christ *now*, not later, and, as such, we have a new creation life in us, even as we occupy mortal bodies, that allows us to be conformed to His image on a daily basis as, by grace through the faith of the Son, we die to self and live according to His life and His love as we await the resurrection and/or transfiguration and **our full inheritance, which is God Himself**. The earnest of the spirit of Christ within us ensures us of this (Ephesians 1:13-14). As the Lord's people, we are to have hearts like Paul's heart that willingly and voluntarily take up our cross, knowing that His grace is sufficient, so that we too can share in the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death so that we might be conformed to His image sooner rather than later. Without suffering, there is no glory (Romans 8:17).

Summary of the Two Deaths

Understanding the two deaths and their ramifications is so important that we need to summarize what has been stated so far before we move onto the fire of God.

It seems that in the sight of God there are only two deaths. The first man or the first Adam brought death into all mankind; thus, this death is rightfully called *the first death*. The Second Man or the last Adam took all mankind into death with Him; thus, this death is rightfully called *the second death*. **Christ died for ALL, consequently ALL died!**

The first man's death is different from the Second Man's death. The first Adam's death has no way out; it is simply death and, of course, sin reigns in this death. All of us are born mortal and we experience death, mortality. However, the last Adam's death is entirely different. The second death is a death to death and sin, resulting in life for all. The second death kills mortality and ushers in immortality. It kills the old man and births the new man, the new creation in Christ where God is all in all. It kills sin and ushers in righteousness. It takes the unclean and produces the clean. The Second Man's death takes away sin altogether, meaning it takes away the sin nature entirely, not merely sins. **Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world** (John 1:29), who bore the sins of many (Hebrews 9:28). Therefore, the Second Man's death is not like the first man's death; it is the Second Death. It is the death of death! This death is essential, for out of it God raises up mankind into life, the life of His Son.

We are called to have a life that radiates a likeness of the second death, conquering through knowing Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings. We are to be immersed (baptized) into His death, experientially identifying with His death. It is a call to die to a self-centered nature and to live by a Christ-centered nature, living and walking by the spirit of God (Galatians 5:25). It is a life that declares: ***Not my will, but Yours be done!***

The out-resurrection awaits all who press on toward the goal for the prize; they will attain to it in the Day of Christ. They will not be hurt by the second death associated with the Great White Throne Judgment, for they will have already been identified with and experientially conformed into a likeness of the second death while they occupied mortal bodies. They are ones who live by the power of His resurrection; therefore, the second death has no power over them.

(10) In order that I might come to know Him in an experiential way, and to come to know experientially the power of His resurrection and a joint-participation in His sufferings, being brought to the place where my life radiates a likeness to His death; (11) if by any means I might arrive at the goal, namely, the out-resurrection from among those who are dead. (Philippians 3:10-11 Wuest, *An Expanded Translation*)

(12) Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. (13) Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, (14) I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3:12-14 NASB)

(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. (Revelation 20:5-6 NASB)

Perhaps Jesus' word on the death of a grain of wheat best describes the second death.

(25) "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. (25) "He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal. (26) "If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him. (27) "Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour." (John 12:24-27 NASB)

The grain dies, but, in a sense, it does not, for out of the grain, the seed form, comes a new resurrected life, a much greater form that bears much fruit. This is what we are all called into, a life that falls into the ground and dies to its grain nature in order to produce new growth and thus new life. Jesus is the consummate example of One who fell into the ground to die. He came to do His Father's will, and His will was to fall into the ground and die. We are called into nothing less. We die to live. **For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory** (Colossians 3:3-4).

Now, this leads to another truth that is linked to the second death. We know that in Revelation 20 the second death is also called *the lake of fire*. Consequently, death and fire are joined as one, which further explains the nature of the second death. It is a death by fire. As we will see, all must go through this fire. We must follow our Lord and Savior today so that we will be raised up in glory in His Day.

The Good and Essential Nature of Fire

What is fire? Interestingly, there is some debate over the correct definition of fire. Obviously, this is beyond the scope of this article, so we will stick to some common definitions of it. Fire is combustion or burning; a substance combines chemically with oxygen from the air and typically gives out bright light, heat, and smoke. Another definition states that fire is the rapid combination with fuel in the presence of heat, typically characterized by flame, a body of incandescent (luminous with intense heat) gas that contains and sustains the reaction and emits light and heat. Oxygen + fuel = heat = fire. Others define fire as that which works at the atomic level to divide the elements.

The word *burn* means to consume, but this does not mean total annihilation in the absolute sense, for the basic elements are not destroyed in fire; the fuel of the fire simply changes.

Einstein's *Law of Conservation of Energy* states that energy is neither created nor destroyed; it can only change form. This is basically what happens with fire. When any matter burns, it undergoes change and energy is transferred, meaning fire is not a totally destructive force as if when the flame has ceased nothing remains. This is not true, for the fuel simply changes form or chemical structure. We might not see the change or recognize it, but it is there.

In the natural realm, consider what would happen if man did not have literal fire. Man could not live throughout the earth without fire. Need we be reminded that the inner core of our planet contains fire that erupts to the surface through volcanoes? Fire is essential for cooking, heating, manufacturing, purifying, cleansing, and, in our modern world, generating energy that runs practically everything we depend upon in our daily lives. Cars run on fire; power plants run on fire; petroleum products are produced by fire; steel is formed by fire; precious metals (gold, silver) are refined by fire; solar power comes from the sun, a huge ball of fire, to name a few examples. Even our human bodies are, to some degree, forms of fire, for we generate heat within our cells to maintain an average temperature of 98.6 degrees F. Without the ability to make heat through fire, mankind would be restricted to the year-round warmer areas of the globe. Needless to say, fire is essential for us to live on planet earth.

Fire is also a purifying and cleansing agent, for, in a good sense, it removes impurities and unwanted materials. Although disputed by some, others credit the Great Fire of London in 1666 for slowing the bubonic plague that is estimated to have killed 100,000 people in England. The fire is suspected of killing off rodents and fleas that carried the pestilence. Another example involves forestry. Have you ever observed a forest that has been destroyed by fire? In time, out of the ashes comes forth new growth as the forest comes alive again. Even well-established forests need to be control-burned periodically so that new and better growth will come forth.

These controlled burns are necessary to remove underbrush and dead trees and brush that hinder growth and serve as tinder if lightning strikes and sets the forest ablaze.

So, fire is a good and essential thing, especially for its ability to cleanse and purify. Keep these points in mind as we expand our understanding of the second death as a lake of fire, for this aspect of literal fire speaks to the spiritual aspect or signification of God's fire.

In scripture, fire is presented and symbolized in many ways. It is not the intent of this section to discuss all the ways fire appears in scripture. If interested, the *Tentmaker* website has an article titled *Fire in the Bible*. <http://www.tentmaker.org/BreakingBread/1.html>

In ancient times, it is clear that God used literal fire to judge nations and cities. The classic example is Sodom and Gomorrah. The more recent example is the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. Because of examples like this, many have been led to believe that God is going to judge the wicked with literal fire as well. However, Paul tells us that **the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual** (1 Corinthians 15:46) and that we must be **taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words** (1 Corinthians 2:13). In other words, it is true that God works in the natural realm, but, as ones who have an earnest of His spirit within us, we need to learn to discern and understand that which is spiritual. The Lord wants us to see beyond the natural and temporal into His realm and to see what He is doing spiritually in the earth today and will do in the ages to come.

Sodom is a great example of how we are to transcend God's physical or temporal judgments to see His spiritual judgments. Have you considered what scripture has to say about the past and future judgment of Sodom? We know that its inhabitants and land were totally destroyed by fire in the days of Abraham, never to rise up again so that its exact location is unknown even to this day. Consider what the Lord Jesus has to say about Sodom and Gomorrah.

"Truly I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city." (Matthew 10:15 NASB)

(23) "And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You will descend to Hades; for if the miracles had occurred in Sodom which occurred in you, it would have remained to this day. (24) "Nevertheless I say to you that it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for you." (Matthew 11:23-24 NASB)

Clearly, the people of these two immoral cities are going to appear before the throne of God, specifically the **Great White Throne**, to be judged. For what purpose? Are they going to be raised up from the dead to undergo another fiery destruction or annihilation, perhaps 5,000 years hence, like the one they had previously experienced when the Lord prematurely cut their lives short? What purpose would this serve from God's perspective other than to exact some form of vengeance? It would appear to be double jeopardy or paying twice for the same crime. Where is this in God's law given through Moses to the ancient sons of Israel? Even man's law generally does not condone double jeopardy.

Some theologians teach that Sodom and Gomorrah are presently in a toaster oven of physical torture and that they will be raised up from this hell-hole only to be cast into another hell-hole called the *lake of fire* that is hotter and viler than their previous imprisonment. Some in America liken it to first being held in a city jail and then later cast into a federal prison. Where does this come from if not from the fertile, carnal mind of man, regardless of what title the man holds? It surely is not in scripture, but it can be traced through pagan religions.

God is not into double jeopardy, for there is no justice in this; it is strictly punitive in the extreme. When we follow the course of justice in the light of first the natural and then the spiritual, we see that the physical or natural fire and brimstone that rained on these immoral cities signify the spiritual truth that God intends to judge the works or deeds of the carnal flesh of man, not for his annihilation or eternal torture (punitive vengeance) but for correction and restoration back to God Himself.

It is similar to Paul's teaching that we must put off the old man, which was crucified with Christ (Romans 6:6), and put on the new man, **which after God is created in true righteousness and holiness** (Ephesians 4:24). Nothing good dwells in the flesh of the old man, for the law of sin dwells there, making it hostile to God (Romans 7:5, 25; 8:7). In our carnal flesh, none of us are any different than the people of Sodom and Gomorrah; we all come from the same corrupt stock. Is it so difficult to accept that God intends to take off the old man of Adam's entire race and put on the new man of the last Adam for the same entire race of people, creating an entirely new people, a new creation? First the natural, then the spiritual; first a natural body, then a spiritual body!

God is spirit, and His fire must be understood in spirit. Another way to state this is that God's fire must be discerned in spirit, or yet another way to state it is that His fire is spiritual fire, not natural fire. In scripture, fire in the natural realm comes first; then fire in the spiritual realm. If fire is a purifying and cleansing agent in the natural realm, then why isn't it a purifying and cleansing agent in the spirit realm? In fact, knowing that God is love dictates that it is more so in the spirit realm. God is spirit and God is fire; therefore, God is spirit-fire. Admittedly, this is playing with words a bit. To use the exact scriptural phrase, **God is a consuming fire**, meaning God is likened to fire. As we will see, His word is also likened to fire.

God, a Consuming Fire

God is spirit, love, light, and life. Light is one of the components of fire; the other component is heat. As discussed in article #60, *Wrath and Anger of God* (November 2013), there are several Hebrew and Greek words translated into the words *wrath* and *vengeance*, some of which denote heated (i.e., fiery) passion, even to blow smoke (i.e., from fire). In addition, wrath is death (not torture), and, as such, God's passion is to bring man's old nature fully into death through the second death of the Second Man. So, within these words, we get an intimation of the fire of God, that is, His heat and light.

The exact expression *consuming fire* appears eight times in scripture, and in all cases, it is used in reference to the Lord and His people. Interestingly, the number 8 signifies *new birth, new creation, or new beginnings*. Does this not intimate the purpose of God's fire is to bring about

something new? God's fire kills off the carnal flesh in order to fully release the life of His Son. Again, it is likened to a purifying and cleansing agent that burns up or removes the flesh, the dross, the chaff, the tares, the disobedience, the rebellion, the lawlessness, the enemies, etc.

Although I use the word *likened*, as in God is likened to fire, I believe we could say that God is fire. If asked, I think God would say: **I AM FIRE!**

Let us consider these eight references, discerning them spiritual to spiritual.

Fire, Glory, Kingdom

God's fire, kingdom, and glory are inter-related and reveal the plan and purpose of God.

And to the eyes of the sons of Israel the appearance of the glory of the LORD was like a consuming fire on the mountain top. (Exodus 24:17 NASB)

This is the first mention of a consuming fire, and it is likened to the glory of the Lord. When the Lord appeared on Mt. Sinai and spoke in the midst of a fire, the sons of Israel feared for their lives, and rightly so. This was Moses' sixth trip to the top of the mountain, and he remained there for forty days and forty nights. A cloud had covered the mountain for six days and Moses was called to enter the midst of the cloud on the seventh day. This is a type of Christ coming in the glory of His Kingdom on the seventh day. Again, this is explained in article #45 on the sixth and seventh days (note link already mentioned). Moses, whom the Lord spoke to face to face (Exodus 33:11), not only likened the Lord's glory to fire but he also likened God Himself to fire, a consuming fire. Again, God is fire!

"For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God." (Deuteronomy 4:24 NASB)

What will be the result of God's consuming fire? In Moses' day, the Lord granted a pardon to the sons of Israel; however, this intimated God's greater plan to fill the whole earth with His glory, a theme later reiterated by Habakkuk. Consequently, all mankind will be pardoned.

(19) "Pardon, I pray, the iniquity of this people according to the greatness of Your lovingkindness, just as You also have forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now." (20) So the LORD said, "I have pardoned them according to your word; (21) but indeed, as I live, all the earth will be filled with the glory of the LORD. (Numbers 14:19-21 NASB)

(13) "Is it not indeed from the LORD of hosts that peoples toil for fire, and nations grow weary for nothing? (14) "For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea. (Habakkuk 2:13-14 NASB)

Along this same line, Ezekiel saw the divine glory of God as he was given a vision of the Lord as the Son of Man on His throne. Take note of fire and glory in his account of the vision.

(26) Now above the expanse that was over their heads there was something resembling a throne, like lapis lazuli in appearance; and on that which resembled a throne, high up, was a

figure with the appearance of a man. (27) Then I noticed from the appearance of His loins and upward something like glowing metal that looked like fire all around within it, and from the appearance of His loins and downward I saw something like fire; and there was a radiance around Him. (28) As the appearance of the rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the appearance of the surrounding radiance. Such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. And when I saw it, I fell on my face and heard a voice speaking. (Ezekiel 1:26-28 NASB)

John's Patmos vision, which has much similarity to Ezekiel's vision, also includes fiery imagery of the Lord Jesus as the Son of Man.

(14) His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire. (15) His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been made to glow in a furnace, and His voice was like the sound of many waters. (Revelation 1:14-15 NASB)

His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself. (Revelation 19:12 NASB)

By drawing upon Moses, the Hebrews epistle brings the Kingdom and, by inference, the Glory and the consuming Fire of God together.

(28) Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; (29) for our God is a consuming fire. (Hebrews 12:28-29 NASB)

What cannot be shaken are those things that have come through the consuming fire of God. Things that can be shaken are things that are consumed in the spirit-fire of God; the things that cannot be shaken, that is, consumed by fire, remain, for they are of the character of the Kingdom of God, more specifically, the character of God's Son and King. Again, for this reason, Paul exhorts us to **walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory** (1 Thessalonians 2:12 NASB).

If we take all of this imagery as literal fire, we miss the very heart of God to purify and cleanse this earth so that not only His glory will fill it but also His righteousness will dwell in it. Jesus' death and resurrection have secured this for not only the earth and all creation but for all mankind. God's fire will go forth until He has consumed all that is not fit for His Kingdom.

God's Fiery Word

In two other *consuming fire* verses, His word is likened to fire that proceeds out of the Lord's mouth or off His tongue.

Behold, the name of the LORD comes from a remote place; burning is His anger and dense is His smoke; His lips are filled with indignation and His tongue is like a consuming fire.... (Isaiah 30:27 NASB)

And the LORD will cause His voice of authority to be heard, and the descending of His arm to be seen in fierce anger, and in the flame of a consuming fire in cloudburst, downpour and hailstones. (Isaiah 30:30 NASB)

As a consuming fire, the Lord's word, which includes His law and commands, is confirmed elsewhere. We could call it His fiery word or fiery law. Let us not forget that the Lord Jesus is the Word. Could we not say that He is the Fire as well? **He is the Fiery Word!**

"Is not My word like fire?" declares the LORD, "and like a hammer which shatters a rock?" (Jeremiah 23:29 NASB)

The voice of the LORD hews out flames of fire. (Psalm 29:7 NASB)

"Out of the heavens He let you hear His voice to discipline you; and on earth He let you see His great fire, and you heard His words [commands, law] from the midst of the fire." (Deuteronomy 4:36 NASB)

From his right hand went a fiery law for them. (Deuteronomy 33:2 KJV) [This verse is included in order to directly link the law to fire.]

Therefore, thus says the LORD, the God of hosts, "Because you have spoken this word, Behold, I am making My words in your mouth fire and this people wood, and it will consume them. (Jeremiah 5:14 NASB)

So I have hewn them by the prophets; I have slain them by the Words of My mouth; and your judgments have been as the light that goes forth. (Hosea 6:5 LITV)

And if anyone wants to harm them, fire flows out of their mouth and devours their enemies; so if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this way. (Revelation 11:5 NASB)

As for the two witnesses, the fire coming forth from them is the same that came forth from Jeremiah. They are not literal flame throwers. It would be comical if it weren't so sad, but some preachers actually believe this speaks of literal flames coming out of their mouths. However, like Jeremiah the prophet, these two witnesses (prophets) speak forth the words of the Lord or the fiery word of God in order to consume, that is, convict the carnal flesh of men.

To reinforce this point, the word or law of God is not only likened to fire but also to a sharp two-edged sword. Of course, Jesus is the Word and He is the Law.

From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. (Revelation 19:15 NASB)

The writer of the Hebrews epistle clearly tells us that this sword is the word of God.

(12) For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. (13) And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. (Hebrews 4:12-13 NASB)

The purpose of the sword is to divide that which is of God (spirit) from that which is of man (soul). Another way to state this is that it is designed to divide righteousness from wickedness or unrighteousness. Undoubtedly, the writer of Hebrews had David's prophetic word in mind when he penned this.

(4) The LORD is in His holy temple; the LORD'S throne is in heaven; His eyes behold, His eyelids test the sons of men. (5) The LORD tests the righteous and the wicked, and the one who loves violence His soul hates. (6) Upon the wicked He will rain snares; fire and brimstone and burning wind will be the portion of their cup. (7) For the LORD is righteous, He loves righteousness; the upright will behold His face. (Psalm 11:4-7 NASB)

Based on history, David knew of God's fiery judgments, not only of nations or cities such as Sodom and Gomorrah, but also of his own people in their wilderness journey. Whether David knew it or not, his words prophetically pointed to the character of all the judgments to follow, starting with Israel (Samaria) and Judah (Jerusalem) and ending with the lake of fire. As referenced already, this same picture of the Lord's eyes judging is also discovered in two other verses in the *Revelation* that draw our attention to the flame of fire.

His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire. (Revelation 1:14 NASB)

His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself. (Revelation 19:12 NASB)

All of this imagery speaks of the Lord as both King and Judge. His eyes see according to His word (law), and His mouth speaks His word (law), and, by the way, He is the Word, and He judges according to His divine purity, for **Your word is very pure** (Psalm 119:140).

Enemies Without and Within

As we have seen in many of the fire verses, the Lord's fire goes forth to consume enemies. We could say that His fiery word divides and conquers. For example, as the sons of Israel were being readied to cross over the Jordan, the Lord promised to go before them as a consuming fire to destroy all their enemies.

"Know therefore today that it is the LORD your God who is crossing over before you as a consuming fire. He will destroy them and He will subdue them before you, so that you may drive them out and destroy them quickly, just as the LORD has spoken to you. (Deuteronomy 9:3 NASB)

Turning to Isaiah, we discover that the Lord's own people had become His enemy, and He came to them as a consuming fire.

From the LORD of hosts you will be punished with thunder and earthquake and loud noise, with whirlwind and tempest and the flame of a consuming fire. (Isaiah 29:6 NASB)

Sinners in Zion are terrified; trembling has seized the godless. "Who among us can live with the consuming fire? Who among us can live with continual burning?" (Isaiah 33:14 NASB)

Do you realize that we have enemies within us as well and that these enemies have to be consumed for us to enter into glory in heavenly bodies, typified by crossing over the Jordan into the land of promise? Who among us believes that in our flesh we can live with the consuming fire? If the flesh of God's chosen people, ancient Israel, could not survive the consuming and jealous fire of God, what makes us think that our sinful flesh or our old man within us could survive His spiritual fire? Thank God; it won't survive. Who in their right mind would want it to survive anyway?

Another way to look at this is to use the illustration of leaven, which, in a figurative or spiritual sense, is likened to corruption, even corrupt teaching (Exodus 12:15; Matthew 16:11-12; Luke 12:1, 1 Corinthians 5:6, 8; Galatians 5:9). Fire is needed to stop leaven from increasing. In the same fashion, leaven or corruption within the first Adam or old man requires the fire of God to stop its growth. Leaven is destroyed by fire.

Herein is the good news: There is a continual burning within those of us who believe; it is God's means of burning up all that is not of the life and character of His Son so that we will be trained up and disciplined as true sons of God. It is like our own internal river or lake of fire. **Who among us can live with continual burning?"**

(15) He who walks righteously and speaks with sincerity, he who rejects unjust gain and shakes his hands so that they hold no bribe; he who stops his ears from hearing about bloodshed and shuts his eyes from looking upon evil; (16) he will dwell on the heights, his refuge will be the impregnable rock; his bread will be given him, his water will be sure. (17) Your eyes will see the King in His beauty; they will behold a far-distant land. (Isaiah 33:15-17 NASB)

(1) O LORD, who may abide in Your tent? Who may dwell on Your holy hill? (2) He who walks with integrity, and works righteousness, and speaks truth in his heart. (3) He does not slander with his tongue, nor does evil to his neighbor, nor takes up a reproach against his friend; (4) in whose eyes a reprobate is despised, but who honors those who fear the LORD; he swears to his own hurt and does not change; (5) he does not put out his money at interest, nor does he take a bribe against the innocent. He who does these things will never be shaken. (Psalm 15:1-5 NASB)

(3) Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? And who may stand in His holy place? (4) He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood and has not

sworn deceitfully. (5) He shall receive a blessing from the LORD and righteousness from the God of his salvation. (Psalm 24:3-5 NASB)

How is this possible? **With people it is impossible, but not with God; for all things are possible with God (Mark 10:27).** How? **For everyone will be salted with fire (Mark 9:49).** Why? Because **God is a consuming fire!**

Paul knew that God is fire. He too went through the fire of God as he died daily for the body of Christ and for the sake of the good news for all mankind. As a former, zealous Pharisee, even a persecutor of the ecclesia, Paul knew that the works of the law could not save anyone. However, he also knew that the works of the flesh emanating from both believer and unbeliever alike could not and would not survive the consuming fire of God.

(12) Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, (13) each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. (14) If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. (15) If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. (1 Corinthians 3:12-15 NASB)

Early in my Christian education, I was taught that these verses apply only to believers. To be sure, they do apply to believers but, perhaps, not to them exclusively. Note Paul's use of the expression *any man* and how this is related to being saved, yet so as through fire, implying that *any man* will be saved but his works may not survive God's consuming fire. Regardless of the symbolic nature of any man's works, all of it must go through the refining, testing, and proving fire of God. Some works will survive and some (probably, many) will not. Even such things as gold and silver must be refined in fire to remove the dross and impurities.

The crucible is for silver and the furnace for gold, and each is tested by the praise accorded him. (Proverbs 27:21 NASB)

"And I will bring the third part through the fire, refine them as silver is refined, and test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, and I will answer them; I will say, 'They are My people,' and they will say, 'The LORD is my God.'" (Zechariah 13:9 NASB)

For You have tried us, O God; You have refined us as silver is refined. (Psalm 66:10 NASB)

"Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction. (Isaiah 48:10 NASB)

... so that the proving of your faith, much more precious than perishing gold, but having been proved through fire, may be found to praise and honor and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ.... (1 Peter 1:7 LITV)

I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich.... (Revelation 3:18 NASB)

Of course, wood, hay, and straw may have a more difficult time passing through God's fire, but perhaps, even these symbolic materials may produce some commendation or reward; nevertheless, they all must be tested, proved, or refined through and by fire. Based on this, could we not conclude that since all of mankind's works must be judged by fire that all of us must pass through the lake of fire? Again, **everyone will be salted with fire**. Is there more than one type of judgmental fire if it is from God? Is there more than one God? No! But, Isaiah gives some good news for those who believe and conquer in this day.

"When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched, nor will the flame burn you."
(Isaiah 43:2 NASB)

In other words, the conquerors will walk through the lake of fire but the second death will not hurt them, for it will have no power over them. Why? Because they will have lain down their lives and the fire of God will have done its work in them to the point that when they face the judgments of God, there will be nothing left to consume. They will simply walk through them untouched.

There are so many ways to discuss this topic that the greatest concern is leaving something out that would help make this message much clearer. It might seem like there is a contradiction over what is judged. Is it simply works or is it character emanating from the carnal flesh that is in battle with the spirit of God? It has to be both, for God is producing a people to rule with His Son who are fully tested, refined, and purified through and through with nothing exempted from passing through His consuming fire. Our faith must be proved by fire.

Let's face it; we all have enemies within us that fight against God. It is a streak of lawlessness. Paul warned the Thessalonians of the mystery of lawlessness. Many commentators today see these verses as referring to an end-time antichrist, but put that aside for a moment and consider these verses as a lawlessness that is inherent in our carnal, sinful nature that is being brought into the second death.

(7) For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way. (8) Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming.... (2 Thessalonians 2:7-8 NASB)

But with righteousness He will judge the poor, and decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth; and He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked. (Isaiah 11:4 NASB)

Here again, we discover God's fiery word slaying the wicked. Now, apply these words to the old man that must be experientially brought into the second death. As we go on in the Lord, there should be fewer and fewer of these enemies, but some continue to linger. However, here is some more good news. The Lord Jesus rules in the midst of His enemies.

The LORD will stretch forth Your strong scepter from Zion, saying, "Rule in the midst of Your enemies." (Psalm 110:2 NASB)

Christ in you is ruling. He is ruling in the midst of you to conform and transform you to His image so that you will bear fruit by doing the good works of the Father. This is the glory of the good news. Relax and let Him rule, expecting Him to kill off your enemies within.

Great White Throne Judgment

(11) Then 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) Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. (15) And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. (Revelation 20:11-15 NASB)

"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" (Revelation 21:8 NASB).

At this point, you might be wondering what all of this has to do with the Great White Throne Judgment as described in John's Patmos vision. After all, for most of our Christian lives we have heard from the pulpit that the above verses are all about a countless number of men and women being cast into a literal hell-fire for endless torture by God who is described as love. They are toast for all of eternity! This is a lie.

Dear brethren, may your eyes be opened to the truth by the Spirit of Truth. All that has been said about the righteous regarding the second death and the fiery judgment of God applies to the unrighteous of all eons, as well. Their turn will come when they must put off the old man and put on the new man, when they must face the same process of death-fire that we have experienced. It is God who is at work in us today, and it will be God who will be at work in them in that day, whether it is literal days or ages.

To use common Christian vernacular, what applies to the *saved* in this age will also be applied to the *lost* from all ages at the Great White Throne Judgment. Actually, there are no lost, for all have been found (i.e., saved) in Christ. He came to save the world, not to condemn it, especially not to condemn it to an eternal inferno with no way out. Stated another way, there will be no lost at the end of the day (ages), for all will have been brought experientially into the second death to be purified and cleansed by the consuming fire of God.

For many of the so-called *lost*, the judgment may be more intense or severe and may last longer but be assured it will end, for when the fire has done its work, it will cease. All leaven will be burned up. God's consuming fire is an unquenchable one that will not cease until it has consumed all that is of sin and death. But this does not mean His fire is endless. God's fire will not be quenched until all that is not of His Son, meaning all death and sin and carnal works, is totally removed from every single person born of Adam's race. The good news is that the death

and resurrection of the Son of God is a 100%, absolute success in the salvation of all men; therefore, God's fire will do its work fully and perfectly in order to return all mankind to what they were in the heart of God before the foundation of the world. To Him are all things, meaning all return to God the Father!

(32) For God has shut up all in disobedience so that He may show mercy to all. (33) Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! (34) For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, OR WHO BECAME HIS COUNSELOR? (35) Or WHO HAS FIRST GIVEN TO HIM THAT IT MIGHT BE PAID BACK TO HIM AGAIN? (36) For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen. (Romans 11:32-36 NASB)

So, if your eyes have been opened to all that has been offered so far, then simply apply the same principles to the dead, the great and the small, standing before the Great White Throne.

Let us consider some other thoughts not covered up to this point.

First, this judgment scene is not about redemption nor is it about being saved by works or even by the works of the law, though the law might come into play to judge sin. Works of the flesh must be judged by some standard and the law of God has to be that standard. After all, God cannot be capricious in His judgments. By the way, for those who see no more law but only grace, the *law* is synonymous with the *word of God*, even God's fiery word.

In his essay on *The Lake of Fire*, J. Preston Eby states this about judgment and redemption: *"Judgment destroys the power of the carnal mind which blinds, which is enmity against God but judgment does not grant redemption. It only breaks rebellion! It breaks man's stubborn will! But redemption was purchased upon the cross."*

Second, Revelation 20:11-15 starts out with a throne, which speaks of the judicial nature of a king. A king's law and judgments emanate from his throne. In fact, a king's word is his law.

"Now it shall come about when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself a copy of this law on a scroll in the presence of the Levitical priests. (Deuteronomy 17:18 NASB)

"Now therefore, O LORD, the God of Israel, keep with Your servant David, my father, that which You have promised him, saying, 'You shall not lack a man to sit on the throne of Israel, if only your sons take heed to their way, to walk in My law as you have walked before Me.' (2 Chronicles 6:16 NASB)

Third, the colors white and red are associated with this great throne. Isaiah first connects the two colors for us. Keep in mind that this word was spoken to apostate Israel and Judah that had turned from the Lord; their sin was as bad as or even worse than that of Sodom and Gomorrah.

"Come now, and let us reason together," Says the LORD, "Though your sins are as scarlet, they will be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they will be like wool. (Isaiah 1:18 NASB)

White speaks of purity and the divine nature and wisdom of Christ (e.g., Matthew 17:2), meaning that the throne in view is pure in all its judgments and is designed to turn the fleshly nature of all standing in its presence from scarlet to white, which, by the way, is the victory and glory of what transpired on a cross in 33 AD. We could say that the color white speaks of the conclusion, and the color red, as in fire, speaks of the process to produce the white. Of course, the color red is associated with blood, and **the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin** (1 John 1:7). Interestingly, the blood of Jesus cleanses and so does the consuming fire of God. This is a double witness of this truth. One speaks of redemption (Ephesians 1:7); the other speaks of consumption.

Fourth, Daniel was given the same vision of the throne as John, only the two visions were separated by about 700 years. Notice the similarity to John's vision of the throne.

(9) "I kept looking until thrones were set up, and the Ancient of Days took His seat; His vesture was like white snow and the hair of His head like pure wool. His throne was ablaze with flames. Its wheels were a burning fire. (10) A river of fire was flowing and coming out from before Him; thousands upon thousands were attending Him, and myriads upon myriads were standing before Him; the court sat, and the books were opened.' (Daniel 7:9-10 NASB)

Both Daniel and John were given visions of the judgment of God going forth from His throne. Daniel saw a river of fire flowing from the throne of God ablaze with fire, and John saw the river as a lake of fire before the Great White Throne. Putting the two visions together reveals that the source of the fire is the throne. In fact, the throne is ablaze with fire, which speaks of the law emanating from God Himself. Should we call the throne of God *the hell of God*? Not if we base hell on man's view of it; a view that is based on man's image and not on God's image.

Daniel was shown the throne with thousands attending to the Ancient of Days and myriads upon myriads standing before the One on the throne. Clearly, this is a judicial scene, for the court sat, meaning it is a scene of the divine courtroom in which judgments are made. The King is seated and judgments come forth from His throne. In our day, a judge sits upon a bench and makes judgments about lawlessness by applying what is written in the books of law that he is sworn to uphold. In Daniel's vision, books were opened, which, most likely, refer to the law by which the court judges the myriads standing before the Ancient of Days. No injustice or partiality will come forth from this court; all will be judged according to the righteousness and impartial justice of God, as expressed in His law.

John's vision reveals who are summoned to appear before the court of God. They are the great and the small that were not included in the first resurrection. They are the dead, and they are made alive in order to stand before the throne to be judged according to their works or deeds. It is their works or deeds (not their beliefs) that are subjected to the lake of fire. The works, not the people, will be consumed by God's fire.

Fifth, there are two sets of books opened before the throne. The book of life is for the Lord's people that were not included (for whatever reason) in the first resurrection. They too must pass through the fire, saved yet so as through fire. It is often taught that the other set of books contains the deeds or works of the dead appearing before the throne. However, based on Daniel's vision, it seems more appropriate that they are the books of God's divine law. No one is saved by the law, but keep in mind what was stated earlier; this is not about redemption, it is about judgment and consuming all that is associated with the first Adam. Christians today seem to downplay the importance of the law, but Paul declared that **the law is good** (1 Timothy 1:8); **the law is holy** (Romans 7:12); and **the law is spiritual** (Romans 7:14). How else is God to judge man's works if they are not judged according to His divine spiritual law?

Sixth, take note of the difference between the two visions: Daniel saw a river flowing from the throne, and John saw a lake before the throne. Taken together, a more complete vision of God's judgment is presented. The fiery word (law) of God flows from His throne as a river that grows into a lake. A lake can be defined as "a place where a river widens out greatly," and this is what John observed. The word of God will go forth like a river of fire that widens out so greatly that it becomes like a lake of fire that engulfs the myriads upon myriads standing before the throne. A river could flow on endlessly, but God's river becomes a lake, meaning that it has limits. It will not flow endlessly, for it has a limitation on its time and use. Simply, when it has accomplished its purpose, it will be no more.

Do you realize that in the natural realm, given enough time, all lakes eventually fill in and are no longer lakes? Could we infer that God's lake ceases as well? Consequently, there is a limit to the time and use of the lake of fire, for it is called the second death and by inference is the last death. Death is called the last enemy, and this must be abolished before the Son hands over the reign to God the Father so that He may be all in all.

(24) Then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. (25) For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. (26) The last enemy that will be abolished is death. (27) For HE HAS PUT ALL THINGS IN SUBJECTION UNDER HIS FEET. But when He says, "All things are put in subjection," it is evident that He is excepted who put all things in subjection to Him. (28) When all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, so that God may be all in all. (1 Corinthians 15:24-28 NASB)

Seventh, the term *second death* only appears in scripture four times and exclusively in the *Revelation*. We have already considered two of them in relation to the conquerors (Revelation 2:11; 20:6). Here are the other two.

Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. (Revelation 20:14 NASB)

"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." (Revelation 21:8 NASB)

To repeat, the second death is the death of death, for both death and hades (the unseen of the dead) are cast into the lake of fire or into the second death. This is all associated with the first death brought onto mankind through the first Adam. It is clear that there is no more place for death and the unseen; both are brought into death. They are forever gone. Sin reigns in death and has no place apart from death and the mortal, corruptible body; it too has to be brought into death by death. This is good news, for sin and death are brought into death, meaning the consuming fire of God demands that they be removed. Keep in mind that under God's divine law, the ultimate judgment is always death; there is nothing beyond this when it comes to God's judgment.

The death of death and hades is God's way of telling all that appear in this scene of judgment: It is done! Death and hades are no more. You cannot go back to the ways of sin and death. I have removed their influence from you forever. It is time to deal with the vestige of sin and death that is in you in order to deliver you out of it completely. When you experience My judgments, you learn righteousness (Isaiah 26:9), and you learn that My Son is your righteousness.

Eighth, some might argue that since God is going to forever wipe out sin and death by the lake of fire, it also means that He is going to wipe out all humans that are cast into the lake. At first glance, this might seem to be the only logic of the argument, but is it? Consider the last verse cited above (Revelation 21:8), along with the following verses that refer to those who are outside of New Jerusalem.

(24) The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. (25) In the daytime (for there will be no night there) its gates will never be closed; (26) and they will bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it; (27) and nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life. (Revelation 21:24-27 NASB)

Outside [without] are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying. (Revelation 22:15 NASB [KJV])

Clearly, this speaks of those who are New Jerusalem (in it and of it) and those who are excluded from it or are not part of it. The kings who bring glory into New Jerusalem are of the city and are the kings chosen to reign with Christ. They go to and fro ministering life and healing (tree of life and its leaves) to all who are not part of New Jerusalem. By the way, New Jerusalem and its walls and gates signify a saved people. **But you will call your walls salvation, and your gates praise** (Isaiah 60:18).

Nothing unclean, as signified by the type of people listed, will ever enter into the joy of salvation, meaning they are outside the city. They must be cleansed in order to enter, and so they will. If they are annihilated by the lake of fire, then why are they even listed as if they are outside it? Why even bring them into the picture at this point? After all, the announcement that God makes all things new has already been made in John's vision. Why must the kings of New Jerusalem go into the earth and visit the nations that are outside, if it isn't to bring about more glory for God and the Lamb that sit upon the throne? Could it be that part of their job is to bring life through the Lamb to all that are outside? For God the Father to be all in all it seems

that all outside, at some point, namely by the consummation of the eons, must be purged and cleansed of their wicked ways and made new. Won't this bring the greatest glory to God and His plan to reconcile all things through the blood of His cross?

Further, annihilation is disproven by Jesus' death. Annihilation demands that the wages of sin be eternal death, which means that Jesus, who paid the full and entire wages of sin, must be suffering eternal death even today. No matter how one views death (*aka* hell), Jesus is either still there or gone forever. He is not available to us, and we are living a lie and have no hope. The good news is that scripture simply states that the wages of sin is death, and that death is to be abolished entirely, meaning no one thing or person will remain in death. Jesus tasted death for all of us, and He was raised up out of it into life.

It is proposed that the lake of fire is the judgment of everything associated with sin and death and nothing more. Everything that emanates out of sin and death must be brought into the second death, but this does not mean that the purpose of this lake is to mete out torture or complete annihilation of men. According to God, there will be no more death; therefore, there can be no eternal death (*aka* eternal hell) either; there is only life. The lake of fire is to bring about the highest and greatest glory to God the Father and His Son.

Ninth, let us revisit the core verse regarding the second death.

(14) For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; (15) and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf. (2 Corinthians 5:14-15 NASB)

Again, take note that ALL died, for Jesus died for ALL. Why? So that they might live for Him who died for them! Don't restrict your thinking of this verse simply to believers of our day. ALL died with Christ; in Christ ALL shall be made alive!

A few verses earlier, Paul stated that **we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad** (verse 10). ALL must appear! The timing and manner is not really all that important, whether it is past, present, or future, or separated by 1,000 years, or it occurs all at once. The point is that it refers to ALL with an ultimate purpose in mind; **so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.** God's plan is that all might live for His Son, for He has brought forth the **justification of life to all men** (Romans 5:18).

The lake of fire will purge and cleanse all the works or deeds of fallen man and the carnal flesh from which it proceeds; no dross will remain. The fire will burn up the carnal flesh and the grave clothes of the dead so that they will be clothed with robes of righteousness of the living. Praise God! This is the purpose of the lake of fire. It is not for torture or annihilation; rather, it is for correction and restoration.

This is what J. Preston Eby has to say on this matter in his article titled *The Lake of Fire*:

The basic purpose of this 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 punishment by penal fire leads back to the beginning of things. The final work of God in this world will be the destruction of the world (order) by penal fire. That will change all things. That will melt all the elements, so that no man can tell you where his original garb was. It 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 wall 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, that He might then be wooed and drawn by the Holy Spirit unto the Father of Spirits and live. [end quote]

The truth is that God plans **to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him [His Son], whether things on earth or things in heaven** (Colossians 1:20). The truth is that **God loves the world!** The truth is that God, in His love, will save all mankind, without exception, and make all things new, so that He may be all in all new.

The lake of fire is essential in bringing about God's purpose of the eons. Eventually, all the unrighteous and wicked will be saved, yet so as through fire, not just all believers will be saved, yet so as through fire. **It is a matter of timing and severity.** Will one suffer loss? Yes! Will it be a temporary torment of one's soul? Probably! Will one be tortured for eternity? No! By the way, some say that the lost will be cast into the lake of fire kicking and screaming. This is conjecture, for scripture is silent on this. Actually, I wonder if it will be just the opposite. Knowing that there is no place to hide and no place to return to, they might realize that there is a much better way for them, even if it will require torment.

Paul's Revelation of God's Fiery Judgment

We might think that John was the only one to see the lake of fire, but it appears that Paul, if he did not see it, at least understood it. These verses have been mentioned already, but let us consider them once more in the light of all that has been presented.

(11) For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. (12) Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, (13) each man's work will become evident; for the day [Great White Throne] will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. (14) If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. (15) If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire [lake of fire]. (1 Corinthians 3:11-15 NASB [added by writer])

Where does this fire come from if not from the throne of God that both Daniel and John saw, and Paul probably saw when he was snatched away to the third heaven (2 Corinthians 12:2)? The fire is for the purpose of testing the quality of man's work. Isaiah referred to it as **the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning** (Isaiah 4:4). What kind of judgment by burning is needed to do this, spiritually speaking? To burn something requires fire. There is only one fire in scripture that is capable of doing this; it is God's consuming fire that will judge the quality of each man's work. But notice that the work must be based on the foundation of God's Son and not on the foundation of man. All that is built on man will be consumed by God's fire, for God is a consuming fire.

The lake of fire may be a season of anguish or even torment for those cast into it, but this is a good thing, for it will lead to their ultimate restoration through the love of God that wins their hearts to truly and willingly love God, doing His will in all things as they continually confess Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. In that glorious day, God the Father will be *All* in all, and all creation will be in love. This is the absolute success, victory, and glory of the cross.

Who among us who claim the name of Jesus has never experienced torment of our soul as we die daily to our own self-centered ways? Assuming we are dying daily. There is a point or, even, many points in our journey of becoming like Christ that we seem to have our own Gethsemane experience. No one is exempt from this! If it is essential for our growth, how much more essential is it for all those cast into God's fiery lake? However, the big difference for them is that they start out not personally knowing the Lord. Our torment comes about in various ways and stages as we die to the old man (self) and grow in the Lord. The difference is that they will start out with torment as they stand in the presence of a righteousness they never knew. Those who worship the beast (within and without) will be tormented, but notice what torments them.

Torment is Testing

The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels [messengers], and in the presence of the Lamb.... (Revelation 14:10 KJV [YLT])

The presence of the righteous Lamb of God and His holy messengers brings torment to the idolaters. The Lamb does not even have to touch them to bring torment; all He needs to do is appear before them. Can you imagine the response from the unrighteous as they appear in the presence of the Righteous One, typified as a gentle lamb? He doesn't appear to them as a roaring lion that devours. No! He is the gentle, loving Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world, for God so loves the world. Can you imagine the response of those looking into the eyes of the Lamb that are filled with the love of God? There will be no hate in His eyes, only compassion and mercy, for **they do not know what they are doing** (Luke 23:34).

To be sure, the words *torment* and *brimstone* do not conjure up good images in most people's minds, especially the Christian mind that has been taught to think in terms of an eternal hell. It

is time to throw off this shackle and have our eyes opened to the greater truth of God's love for all. Both *torment* and *brimstone* have meanings that actually are quite encouraging.

The word *torment* is translated from the Greek word *basinizo* [*Strong's* G928]. The word *basinizo* comes from the root word *basanos* [G931], which, according to *Strong's Concordance*, refers to a touchstone.

Depending on the source, there are various and conflicting meanings assigned to this word. Based on a variety of sources, it can mean to...

1. Test (metals) by the touchstone, which is a black siliceous stone used to test the purity of gold or silver by the color of the streak produced on it by rubbing it with either metal.
2. Question by applying torture.
3. Torture.
4. Vex with grievous pains (of body or mind), to torment.
5. Be harassed, distressed, of those who are at sea struggling with a head wind.

Of the five definitions, the first one is the most intriguing and, perhaps, the most accurate one in understanding the true nature of torment, for this one dates back to the Babylonians. In that day, a touchstone was a black siliceous stone that was used to test the purity of gold or silver. When the touchstone was rubbed across gold or silver, the streak caused by the touchstone turned a certain color and the color determined the quality of the metal. The touchstone was also called the **proving stone**. In other words, this stone was used to prove the quality of the gold and silver. This was the meaning of the word *basinizo* up to the third century AD, which means that when it was penned by John in the first century, it simply referred to a touchstone or testing and not to torment, and definitely not to torture. Jonathan Mitchell's *New Testament* attempts to capture this original meaning.

"he or she will also drink out of the wine of God's rushing emotion (strong passion; anger) – of the one having been mixed undiluted within the cup of His inherent fervor (natural bent; impulse; indignation; wrath). And he will be examined (scrutinized with the touchstone to test his "mettle") with Fire and Deity (or: in union with Fire, even Divine qualities) in the presence of (before; the in the sight of) the set-apart agents, and in the presence of (before) the little Lamb." (Revelation 14:10 JMNT)

It is a testing or examination or proving the worth of the ones appearing before the little Lamb. This same Greek word is found in the story of the disciples battling the waves while in a boat.

But the boat was already a long distance from the land, battered [*basinizo*] by the waves; for the wind was contrary. (Matthew 14:24 NASB)

Jonathan Mitchell translates this as **continuously being tried – as with a touchstone to test its metal** (and thus, its mettle). Clearly, the disciples were being tested by the waves, but they were not tortured and they survived the rough weather.

Notice that in Revelation 14:10, the testing or examination is by fire and brimstone or, as Mitchell puts it, Deity. Thus, we are given the same picture of God's spirit-fire signifying purification through testing. What about the brimstone?

Brimstone as an Agent of Love

... he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone (Revelation 14:10 NASB)

... their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."
(Revelation 21:8 NASB)

It can be stated without much, if any, contradiction that when most people hear the word *brimstone*, they conjure up images of people being tormented (actually, more like tortured) in *hell*. As stressed many times in my writings, the modern-day concept of hell maligns the loving and merciful character of God.

In the physical sense, the English word *brimstone* simply refers to sulfur (sulphur). The word is traced to the Old English word *brynstan*, which is made up of *brin*, meaning "to burn," and *stan*, meaning "stone." Taken from the ground, sulfur, which has the atomic number 16, appears as a bright yellow crystalline solid that burns easily; hence, it is called a **burning stone**. Notice that we are presented not only with a touchstone but now a burning stone.

Sulfur is one of the oldest known substances used as a fungicide (kills fungus) and pesticide (kills pests). It is a component in fertilizer, black gun powder, and matches, and is used in the process of manufacturing cellophane, rayon, rubber, bleaching paper, and a host of other products. Also, it is an essential element of life, being found in two amino acids, cysteine and methionine, and it is used to save lives and fight infections by being formulated into a form of drugs called **sulfa drugs**. As such, in a physical or natural sense, sulfur is not a bad thing, for it has many good uses, especially when it comes to life and its preservation. On the other hand, it can also be used to kill.

When it comes to its spiritual meaning or application, the traditions of men have built up quite a bias against the word *brimstone*. Bible dictionaries generally identify *brimstone* as sulfur (sulphur), an inflammable mineral substance found in quantities on the shores of the Dead Sea, which is a most appropriate understanding of the word. Most go on to define it as denoting destruction or punishment and expressing **the idea of excruciating torment**. This is based on the literal destruction of the ancient cities on the plain, Sodom and Gomorrah, and on a literal and torturous lake of fire. The question is this: Is there a spiritual meaning to *brimstone* that goes beyond physical destruction of the flesh?

The first mention of *brimstone* is found in the account of the Lord judging Sodom and Gomorrah by totally destroying the cities of the plain by fire and brimstone. There was no torture in this judgment; it was simply a total destruction of the city and its inhabitants. All who died on the plain will be raised up in the second resurrection to face the Great White Throne Judgment.

(24) Then the LORD rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone [*gophriyth*] and fire from the LORD out of heaven, (25) and He overthrew those cities, and all the valley, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground. (Genesis 19:24-25 NASB)

The Hebrew word for *brimstone* is *gophriyth*, which is related to cypress resin and, by analogy, inflammable (burning) sulphur, and is derived from the Hebrew word *gopher*, which is identified with a type of wood, in particular, cypress wood. If you recall, Noah was commanded to make the ark out of gopher wood (Genesis 6:14).

In the New Testament, the first mention of *brimstone* comes from Jesus as He referred to the ancient judgment in Lot's day (Luke 17:29), and the last mention in scripture is associated with the Great White Throne Judgment and the lake of fire (Revelation 21:8).

The Greek word for *brimstone* is *theion*, which conveys the sense of flashing, as in inflammable sulphur, and is derived from *theios*, which means "**divine, godhead.**" This has led some commentators to refer to the fire and brimstone of Revelation as **Fire and Deity**.

Putting all these notes together, it is proposed that, spiritually speaking, brimstone denotes something good, not bad, for it speaks of God's means of cleansing of man. In the physical sense, it was used to literally destroy sinful flesh (i.e., death of the body, not torture), but, in the spiritual sense, it signifies (figuratively speaking) the cleansing of man from his sinful nature and works of the flesh. Its ultimate purpose is salvation, not destruction or annihilation.

Consider these few points.

First, the first mention of a Hebrew word in the Old Testament sets the meaning for the Greek word in the New Testament when the same Hebrew verse is repeated or referenced in the New Testament. As such, in its primal meaning, *brimstone* refers to *gopher wood*, which was used to save Noah and his family who were brought safely through the water; in type, baptized into Christ through His resurrection (1 Peter 3:20-21). Salvation!

Second, in the Greek, *brimstone* is also connected to that which is *divine*. Many probably think of it as connected to the devil and hell, but there is a much better connection, given the fact that the words *divine* and *godhead* are attached to the meaning of *brimstone*. Brimstone is the character of the fire. However, it is not ordinary fire and brimstone; it is **God is consuming Fire and Deity**. There is nothing in this that relates to the natural; it is spiritual throughout.

Third, brimstone is like **a sulfa drug** used to fight off infection and disease in the mortal body. In the spiritual sense, it signifies the agent by which God cleanses or, if you will, purges man from the works or deeds of the flesh (Revelation 20:13). All the dead will be judged before the Great White Throne and will have a part in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death. Will this bring torment to (testing of) one's soul, as in weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matthew 8:12; 13:42, 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30; Luke 13:28)? Undoubtedly, it will. After all, even some treatments of illnesses and diseases cause pain in the physical flesh.

Fourth, the atomic number for sulfur is **16**, which is the number of **love**. **God is love**, and in His love He mercifully judges, even the unjust, for the purpose of leading all to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth through the man Christ Jesus (Anointed, Messiah) who gave Himself a ransom for all, not just some or a few but **ALL** (1 Timothy 2:4-6). Could we not say that at the heart of brimstone is **God is love!**

Fifth, the gematria for the Hebrew word for *brimstone* is 693, which is a factor of 9 times 77. The number **9** signifies **judgment**, and the number **7** signifies **divine perfection** or **perfection of what is in view**. The number **77** could signify either a **double witness** or a factor of 7 times 10 with the number **10** signifying **ordinal completion** or **perfection of divine order**, as well as **the fullness of law and responsibility**. As a whole, these numbers all point to God's perfect judgment. Thus, brimstone signifies God bringing about His divine, perfect order that will ultimately include the unjust. At the consummation of the ages, the unrighteous will join the ranks of the righteous company of God.

Sixth, the gematria for *brimstone* in Greek is **144**, which signifies **the first resurrection saints**. 144 is also the multiplication of 12 by 12, and the number **12** signifies **divine government**; also it is the primary number of **New Jerusalem** (Revelation 21-22).

Brimstone could be called **the sulfa drug of God** that will cleanse and purge all mankind of sinful deeds, so that by the consummation of the ages, all will be restored to God, so that the Father will be **All in All New** (1 Corinthians 15:20-28; Revelation 21:5), proving **love never fails!**

Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! (Romans 11:33)

Conclusion

Before closing this out, I have one clarification to make. In other writings I have often referred to the lake of fire as the fiery law of God and made the point that God's fiery law is going to judge the dead. This was based on seeing the opened books as God's divine law, His law books. In some measure, I have made this point in this article but have purposely muted it a bit. Although I see some truth in this, I no longer hold to it so tightly. Remaining with the principle of spiritual to spiritual, it seems a bit too legalistic and, frankly, natural to inject the law so strongly, as if it was something apart from Christ Himself. When the law or even God's word is mentioned, I venture to say that many think of Moses' law and the many translations we use today that are commonly called the inspired word of God or the bible. But what is the Word of God, and what is the Law of God? The answer is not *what* but *who*. Who is the Word of God and who is the fulfillment of the Law of God? Of course, it is the Son of God who is the Word. **In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God** (John 1:1).

The One sitting upon the Great White Throne is the Word. Most likely, He won't open a thing called the bible and read from it. He won't even open a law book to cite chapter and verse. He is the Word, and He is the Law. What He speaks is truth. He is the Truth and all that He sees, all that speaks, and all that He judges is based on His life as Truth. His Word is Truth. The Lord doesn't even need a book of life to know His own, for He knows all that are of His life. **The Lord knows who are His** (2 Timothy 2:19). He is the Book!

It is my opinion that the books referenced in Revelation 20 are meant to be taken figuratively or symbolically of the action coming forth from the One on the throne. His word is like fire that shatters a rock. Truly, that which emanates from His mouth is the lake of fire, for it will shatter all that is of the old man and his works.

The entirety of the *Revelation* is an unveiling of Jesus Christ. It is about Him. It is about Him being unveiled in all of humanity. All humanity (mankind) will be an expression of the Son of God and the Son of Man. He is the New Creation. He is filling all things with His life so that His Father may be all in all in all things new. The second death and lake of fire signify the Person of the Word of God bringing all things into perfection, all to the glory of God.

It seems apparent, at least to me, and I hope to you, that the second death, the lake of Fire and Deity, is God's way of bringing all the dead of mankind into the life of His glorious ALL in ALL as He makes all things new. Death in all its forms is an enemy, and God's Son came to defeat all the works of every enemy of God and of man. By the way, He did it!

Jesus summed up the plight of man when He cried out on the cross: **"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"** The good news is that this cry has been resolved to the good and glory of all mankind. It is a settled issue. This cry, though it cries out from the depths of many today, is destined to end forever, for the Son has declared: **"Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades"** (Revelation 1:17-18).

HE HAS DONE IT! THE SECOND MAN HAS FIXED ALL THAT WAS BROUGHT UPON MANKIND BY THE FIRST MAN'S ONE TRANSGRESSION. IT IS DONE! DEATH AND SIN HAVE BEEN DEFEATED, AND THEIR DESTINY IS TOTAL, ABSOLUTE DEATH.

All that was and has been wrought upon mankind by the first death of the first man will be balled up or boxed up, so to speak, into one whole package and the entire package will be thrust into the second death of the Second Man so that it is no more. In God's eyes, it is a done deal. **Christ died for all, consequently all died. In Christ all will be made alive.**

That which has brought death and its companion sin into mankind as an incurable infection with no way out for mankind has been given a sentence of death. The day is coming when death and sin will be cast into death and cease from God's creation forever. The consummate enemy of mankind and of all creation will be finally and forever cast out of every man and women that has lived and yet will live on planet earth. Death (and sin) will never be seen again and no one will ever be tempted to return to this horrific state. Most likely, no one will ever remember it once it has passed. The roots of our sin will not even come to memory, for they will be dead, plucked up, and cast into a fiery death.

The whole of the lake of fire is a picture of Lazarus coming out of the tomb after four days and Jesus commanding: **"Unbind him, and let him go."** And, so it will be for all of mankind, every single natural man and woman that came from the soil of the earth. All will come out of death into life. The grave clothes of death will be removed once and for all, never to be applied to man again. Hallelujah! **Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!**