

THE UPWARD CALL

*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,
I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God
IN CHRIST JESUS.*

(Philippians 3:13-14 NASB)

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The Second Death

Recently, I completed an article on the second death or the lake of fire of Revelation 20. You are encouraged to read the full (at least as I see it at this time) unfolding of this generally misunderstood topic. Here is its link: <http://www.kingdomandglory.com/art/art61.html> What follows is a brief summary of the article.

The last enemy that will be abolished is death. (1 Corinthians 15:26 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])

According to Paul, death will be abolished, and according to John, Jesus now holds the keys of death and hades (the unseen) (Revelation 1:18). John's Patmos vision reveals that death is cast into the second death. Have you ever wondered why it is called the second death? Or, if there is a second death, then what is the first death? Keep in mind that 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?

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. 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? The answer to these questions came to me as I inquired of the Lord. I believe He gave me some revelation that I have yet to read among the commentators. I am not saying it isn't out there, just that I have never read it; so, this is a new understanding for me, and I pass it along to you.

The answer is discovered in two men and no others. According to Paul's gospel, there are only two men in view so far as God and the history of mankind are concerned. All matters related to death and life 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, 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)

(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 [His death was their death], that the living ones may live no more to themselves, but to the One having died for them and having been raised. (2 Corinthians 5:14-15 LITV [WNT])

The first death refers to the first Adam's death. *In Adam ALL die*. The first man or the first Adam brought death into all mankind; thus, this death is rightfully called *the first death*, and this is abolished in the lake of fire. The second death refers to the last Adam's (Second Man's) death. *One (Christ) died for all, consequently, ALL died*. The Second Man or the last Adam took all mankind into death with Him; thus, this death is rightfully called *the second death*. His death is our death. Adam's entire race experiences two deaths of entirely different character and consequence.

The first Adam's death has no way out; it is simply death and, of course, sin reigns in this death. It produces nothing beyond death; it is life unto death. All of us are born mortal and all of us 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. It produces life; it is death unto life. *In Christ all will be made alive!* The second death abolishes (takes away) 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 the life of His Son.

In Romans, 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. 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*. 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). 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 (and, will lead) 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 (John 12:32; 1 Corinthians 15:45).

This is the meaning and great significance of the second death. It is the total and absolute elimination of all forms of death and sin in order to free all born of Adam's race, without exception. The second death is not about eternal torture (*aka* hell) or complete annihilation of the unrighteous. It is all about **God is love** and His purpose to woo all hearts back to Himself so that **God may be all in all** as He is **making all things new** (1 Corinthians 15:28; Revelation 21:5).