

# Defining the Second Death

## ***Inherent with the Doctrine of the Resurrections from the Dead is a Co-Dependent Phenomenon identified in Scripture as 'the Second Death'. How Many Christians Understand what this Unique Penalty Involves?***

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When a person comes to understand that essential fifth Doctrine of Christ, identified in the first two verses of the sixth chapter of Hebrews: *the Resurrection from the dead*, he is also drawn into a more acute awareness of the counterpart experience to this phenomenon, that of deaths, which we all face with inevitable certainty. We're all familiar with death, but common religious convention in some ways obstructs our understanding the matter fully. Not only do we have religious persuasions which see no real **need** for any resurrection, as they hold the belief that all who die go immediately to their eternal reward! Of those who hold that persuasion, but who acquiesce to the certainty of a resurrection on the strength of clear and pointed scriptures, it is the rare individual who can explain the real need for such an occurrence, and fewer still which can offer a sensible explanation of the need for **more than one**, with one thousand years between!

### **Beheaded for their Witness**

A well-known passage in the book of Revelation makes this thought provoking assertion: "*And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.*" (Rev. 20:4-6) Already, just from this short scripture, we're at odds with several key elements of main stream theology!

We are here introduced to a scenario quite different from the common persuasion. First, there is to be a thousand year government in which Christ and His Saints will rule. Second, these who were beheaded for their witness (who obviously were dead as a result) are then raised again to become co-rulers in that Kingdom, which verses such as Revelation 1:4-6 and 5:8-10 show to be upon the Earth. Third, we're introduced to a 'first' resurrection, which necessitates that there be a subsequent resurrection.

If these truths don't create enough theological mayhem, it also speaks of those who are privileged to be in the 'first' as being exempted from a potent phenomenon, that of a '**second death**'! So not only is there more than one resurrection, (with 1000 years between them), but also there IS a 'second death'! Under commonly held views regarding death and humanity's eternal reward, what possible need is there for a second death? Isn't one death sufficient? In most belief systems, a first death is all that's needed to usher the deceased into either heaven or to heave them into hell. Is there some further assignment beyond that requiring a resurrection and a subsequent death? What does mainstream religion not fathom, as these events are spoken of as very necessary and **were** understood by the early New Testament Church.

There are many examples of individuals who have been raised from the dead, such as when Elijah raised the widow's son,<sup>1</sup> when Elisha raised the elderly Shunammite couples' daughter,<sup>2</sup> and when Jesus raised Jairus' daughter,<sup>3</sup> and then later raised up Lazarus after he had been dead four days.<sup>4</sup> Besides these, there were many un-named **others**

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Kings 17:17-24

<sup>2</sup> 2 Kings 4:32-37

<sup>3</sup> Matt. 9:25, Mark 5:23-42, Luke 8:55

<sup>4</sup> John 12:1, 10 & 17

who came up out of their graves <sup>5</sup> when God the Father beamed-down the Power to raise His Son. Many ‘saints’ who had recently died also arose and went into the city where they were recognized by *many* people who had known them! These all **were dead**, but were raised again to physical life. But, none of them are still alive today, which means they all died a second time.

Now was their second decease **the** ‘second death’ as Revelation 20:6, 20:14 & 21:8 refers to? Or is the second death the phenomenon Jesus referred to in Matt. 10:28? “*And fear not them which kill the body, but **are not able to kill the soul**: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.*” (Hell is ‘*gehenna*’, **not** the grave in this place). There’s the KIND of death men can cause and there is the kind of death only God can impose: a total extinction of life from further possibility of any continuing existence! Destruction of the soul is a formidable consideration, another theological conundrum with main-stream religious beliefs.

### A Second First Death

There is precedent of people having been raised from the dead (not to mention those resuscitated medically) who later died the physical death, the same as before. We have people who experienced (or will experience) the first death more than once. These all died the ‘first death’ a second time. Their second decease wasn’t the ‘second death’! **The** second death is not determined just by numerical sequence, but rather, it’s a different kind of death. Men can’t cause **this** kind of death, which is insightful in its own right. It **is** possible to die a physical death more than one time, as the above five examples illustrate.

### Why Did He Do It?

We might pause to consider why it was that Jesus raised Lazarus (whom Jesus loved). <sup>6</sup> IF such a resurrection had the remotest possibility of subjecting him to the second death, would He have raised him? Consider the possibility that Jesus wanted Lazarus alive on the soon coming Day of Pente-

cost, when he could receive the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, making him eligible for the ‘first resurrection’, where he otherwise might not have been! Jesus wanted him to be among those raised in the first resurrection, the *better* resurrection, as well as certain select ‘*other saints*’ who had died some short time before Christ’s resurrection, whom we read of in Matthew 27:52-53. This situation also helps us properly define the second death.

Now these several peoples named above, they **all died again!** Their deaths were the *physical* death both times. The same could be said of anyone ‘raised’ from certain death by medical intervention. Their recurring death is a repeat ‘first death’ by type, **not** the ‘second death’ experience, which involves a different kind of cessation. This area of understanding is more essential to understanding the various resurrections than might first appear. It removes one obstacle that many struggle with.

Consider IF any of these three, prior to Lazarus, were not converted in their lifetimes. After all, Christ hadn’t yet died for their sins, we have no record that they lived righteous lives, and God’s Spirit wasn’t yet available to them, as Christ hadn’t yet risen and His Spirit hadn’t yet been poured out, as happened first on the Day of Pentecost! If any of these were not ‘saved’ in their lifetimes, due to **in**opportunity, (not rejection) then they will be afforded their (first) chance in the second resurrection. But coming up in the second resurrection *could* subject those three individuals, resurrected in past ages, to the *first* (type of) death yet again! But perhaps I’m getting ahead of the story at this point.

Where we need to think carefully is in resolving how those whom God (and/or Satan) blinded lest they come to conversion without ‘the Father having drawn them’. (John 6:44, John 12:40, *quoting Isaiah 6:10* and Romans 11:25-26, *quoting Isaiah 59:20*). Those who died too young; those who lived and died before the time of Moses; those who lived in un-evangelized pagan societies; those who God specifically blinded: (Romans 11:7-8, *quoting Isaiah 29:10*) **all** of these never had a legitimate chance! Are they to ever have one?

In that other place where Christ elaborated on the various resurrections, in John 5:24, we find this comment. “*Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that*

<sup>5</sup> Matthew 27:52-53 “*...the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.*” These were well-known individuals!

<sup>6</sup> John 11:36

heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.” When we contrast this with Revelation 20:6, we read: “*Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the **second death hath no power**, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.*” There are people pre-assigned to Life, who by their conversion, are exempted from the power of the second death. Both of these passages refer to the same contingent of specially elected people.

### Bypassing Death Entirely?

Now an interesting side consideration to this is a small contingent of people, who are referred to as “*those who are alive and remain*”. A certain fortunate few won’t even experience the first death! Those Saints still alive at the point in time when the first resurrection occurs will pass directly into the immortal state. (1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 4:15-17)


### Bypassing the Second Resurrection

Another familiar category of people spoken of by Jesus, John the Baptist and the Apostle Paul are those who have rejected their calling.<sup>7</sup> Being truly called of God is not something that’s disregarded or spurned without consequence! Those who **do** spurn it await **death**, not opportunity, like is to be afforded those who live again (not just being resurrected for sentencing, but who truly ‘live again’) in the second resurrection era.

At the resurrection to sentencing in which ALL that are in their graves will hear a call to appear before the Great White Throne for sentencing (compare Rev. 20:13 with John 5:28-29 and Mat. 25:31-46). This resurrection is not the one mentioned just before in which ‘*the books are opened*’ to the understanding of those brought up, and their record thereafter evaluated for proper placement. As Rev. 14:13 states, “*And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which **die in the Lord from henceforth**: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.*” Noting the exquisite placement of this verse, just **after** the Saints see

justice upon the Beast Power which tormented that final generation but **before** the final harvest of the world, the second harvest of saints, concurrent with the gathering-in of the wicked to burn them up in the Lake of Fire, we can see that same period of time referred to also in Isaiah 65:17-22. Referring to the millennial age: “*For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying. There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the **child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed** ...for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and **mine elect** shall long enjoy the work of their hands.*” For both the ‘*sinner*’ and the ‘*child*’ (God’s elect) to approach the same relative age, (the century mark), **together**, and for the ‘sinner’ to be regarded as accursed, we must be seeing people living within an opportunity period: This same age in which ***the books*** (*biblion*) are opened! Accursed is the same condition we read of in Hebrews 10:26-27. “*For if we sin wilfully after that we **have received** the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and **fiery indignation**, which shall **devour** the adversaries.*”

### Death in the Lake of Fire

One essential thing to understand about the ‘second death’: it involves the Lake of Fire, **not the grave!** Referring to **final sentencing**, we read this in Revelation 20:13-15. “*And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. **This is the second death**. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into **the lake of fire**.* And in Revelation 21:8, “*But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in **the lake** which burneth with fire and brimstone: **which is the second death**. This is no ordinary death!* 

<sup>7</sup> Matt. 3:10-12, 13:40-42, **John 15:6**, **Hebrews 10:26-31**, Luke 3:16-17.