

Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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First Resurrection – Second Death

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John exhorts Christians to be faithful to their Lord, even if it means death. Such unwavering commitment is promised to be rewarded with the victorious crown of life (*Revelation 2:10*). Christians in John’s day were suffering persecution for putting God first in their daily life. Each day, serving the Lord was a life or death proposition, literally. One encouraging statement from God highlighting life and death is, “*Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: over these the second death hath no power...*” (*Revelation 20:6*).

For there to be a resurrection, there must first be a death. For there to be a second death, must there also be a first death? John helps us to know contextually that a death has occurred. The death of humans is the focus, for John sees “souls.” This is the immaterial part of man that activates the body with life. Angels are identified as “spirits,” (*Hebrews 1:13-14*) but never as “ministering souls.” John saw “souls” separated from their body because they have been “*beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and the word of God...*” (*Revelation 20: 4*).

The “second death” is also clearly established as “eternal separation” from God in “Hell.” Jesus warns us of the “*unquenchable fire*” of “hell” (*Mark 9:44*). Paul

encourages us as servants living the sanctified life to be reminded of the reality of our previous life “*the wages of sin is death; but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord*” (*Romans 6:23*). Sin separates us from God (*Isaiah 59:2*), and to be separated from God eternally in the “lake of fire” is the second death. John makes it clear in *Revelation 20*: “*this is the second death, even the lake of fire*” (v. 14). The eternal consequences of those inheriting eternal life and eternal death follows: “*And if any was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire.*” (v.15).

Those who had been faithful unto the Lord did not worship the beast nor his image and received not the mark of the beast on their hand nor their forehead (*Revelation 20:4*). Their sanctified life unto the Lord meant they would not practice any form of idolatry, including “Caesar Worship.” Identifying Him as “God,” worshipping his image as “God,” and honoring him as “God” in one’s “thinking” and “deeds” were not possible in the Christian, who only worships and serves the one true God.

To empower the living to remain faithful, John records a plea of the physically dead who had been slain for the testimony of Jesus Christ. Earlier in *Revelation*, John

saw the same slain martyred souls positioned under the altar crying out, “*How long, O Master, the holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on earth*” (*Revelation 6:10*)? Now we see those slain for their faith, being vindicated before all with God avenging their blood upon idolatrous imposters who dwell upon earth. Instead of remaining “under the altar,” they are triumphantly “sitting on thrones” (*Revelation 20:4*).

Sitting on thrones, they have “*been given judgment*” in the sense they have been approved of God, with God judging the beast and the false prophet, who has promoted the Caesar worship (*Revelation 19:20*). Sitting on thrones, martyred souls reign with Christ for a God-determined- complete period indicated as 1,000 years (*Revelation 20:6*).

Though dead, these souls live because their blood has been avenged, and their cause has been brought to life again. Breathing life-giving vindication to those who loved not their life unto death (*cf. Revelation 12:11*), is the first resurrection (*Revelation 20:5*). The individual martyred saint who “*shares in the first resurrection*” will not be hurt with the second death, for the faithful will be raised with a glorified body for entrance into heaven in the “second resurrection!”