

Part A: Salvation, Part B: Judgment, Part C: The Ages to Come

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C-5: Deliverance from the Lake of Fire? Society of the Future!

A big question now: Is there any actual evidence from the Scriptures that those who land in the Lake of Fire may get released from it? There is a hint of this in the last two chapters of the Revelation Book:

“He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be My son. 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.”
(21:7-8, KJV)

Here the passage elaborates on what the previous chapter 20 had revealed about those evildoers, whose final destination was the Lake of Fire, describing them in contrast against those whose names were *“written in the Book of Life”*. (20:15)

Now regarding those who are sent to the Lake of Fire, the passage states they *“shall have their part”*, meaning their destiny or portion will be in the Lake of Fire. But does that mean their destiny or *“part”* in the Lake of Fire has to be permanent?

In our human experience, we can look back on our lives and see that, on occasion, we chose our destiny, our path of life. Destiny sounds like a permanent thing; nevertheless, it’s not something that cannot be changed.

Let us take the example of a thief who becomes aware that the path

and destiny he chose at some point in life has led him into the wrong destination. With that awareness, it would be possible for him to turn around, carve out a new path, and extricate himself from his den of thieves and corrupted way of life - in other words, to choose a new and better destiny.

If this can happen in one's earthly life, why would it not be possible for the same to happen in the Afterlife? One's passage into another realm (and destiny) at death does not mean we lose the power of choice and the power to choose a better destiny.

Christ assured the Smyrna church, *"He who overcomes will not be hurt at all by the second death"* (Revelation 2:11, NIV)... which means that those who are not believers (or overcomers) will be hurt by the second death.

But to be "*hurt*" (harmed or injured) does not have to mean a permanent condition. After getting "*hurt*", normally there follows a period of recovery and healing. If their sojourn in the "*second death*" region (whether Hades or the Lake of Fire) produces a change of heart and repentance, would not God want to reward them with release from their imprisonment into a realm of blessing and acceptance?

Something similar is implied in the phrase, *"Over such the second death has no power."* (Revelation 20:6) For those who are part of the First Resurrection, they have escaped the Second Death completely; it has "*no power*" over them.

But for those who are not resurrected, that Second Death will have power. But how much power? Is it an all-or-nothing-at-all verdict? Or could it be that for many souls the Second Death will only have some power? Among those who are not resurrected, we could imagine that there would be varying degrees of mischief, error, and evil-doing to account for. Could it not be then that there are varying degrees of punishment, refining, and prison terms, depending on the severity of the crimes and attitudes of the souls who are dwelling in Hades?

They are there, awaiting the day of Final Judgment and a possible "*second death*" and incarceration in the Lake of Fire. However, since

Death and Hades is more of a “holding cell” type of situation, they still have opportunity to repent from their sinful orientations, which might yet permit them to have their names *“written in the Book of Life”*. (Revelation 20:15)

Thus, it could be said of those who are in Death and Hades, the Second Death has varying degrees of power - total power over the incorrigibles, but only some power over those who move towards repentance.

Further ahead in the *Revelation Book* we read,

Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates. Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and fornicators and murderers and idolaters, and every one who loves and practices falsehood. (Revelation 22:14-15 - RSV)

Here the description of the evildoers mirrors pretty much that of the previous one (21:8) of those who are supposed to be in the Lake of Fire. We learn also that they are not allowed into the Heavenly City. But why would that be of any concern if those souls had been safely imprisoned in the Lake of Fire (at the Great White Throne Judgment)?

Could it be that these *“dogs and sorcerers, etc.”*, or some of them at least, are not in the Lake of Fire anymore but are dwelling on the New Earth (*“outside”* the gates of the City)? So what has happened? Could it be that some of the Lake-of-Fire inmates have been released and allowed to dwell on the New Earth?

But isn't the New Earth supposed to be pristine and unpolluted, we may wonder? So what are these characters doing in that environment? Well perhaps they are those souls whose purging time in the Lake of Fire was completed; they repented, made restitution, and are trusted enough to be released.

And now on the New Earth, no doubt they will be glad to be there, even if not allowed entrance into the City. Compared to the Lake of Fire, it would be heavenly enough for them. But they would remain on probation, and restricted from entering the Heavenly City. *“But nothing unclean will*

ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life." (Revelation 21:27, ESV) Again, we have here the suggestion that the New Earth will be inhabited by a mixture of righteous and unrighteous citizens.

Here is another Scripture that seems to point to the idea of release from punishment: *"Indeed I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie - indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you."* (Revelation 3:9) Whatever punishment *"those of the synagogue of Satan"* had to endure - be it the Lake of Fire or something else we don't know - it is apparent that they were forgiven and released. That must be the case if they are in a position where they can come and worship before the feet of those whom they had once persecuted.

We may speculate too that, if Satan will be granted release from the *"bottomless pit"* at the end of the Millennium, then why could not some of the Lake-of-Fire inmates also be released? ([Revelation 20:7-8](#)) Satan, when given his freedom, will show no signs of remorse, change, or repentance. God is only using him, at the end of the Millennium, to test the loyalties of Earth's inhabitants.

Anyway, the point here is, if Satan, who is the worst of all criminals, can be released for a time, then why could not human souls, who are far less dangerous and influential, be released at certain times? Especially if they have shown signs of repentance, it would seem the reasonable and compassionate thing to do.

This may be speculation, but perhaps, after being tested in the Lake of Fire for some time, these inmates will be allowed onto the New Earth. And similar to our earthly prison systems, they would be on a sort of probationary period - kept under controlled conditions to see if they are ready to handle their new freedom. Whether they will ever be written in the Book of Life and thus allowed entrance into the Holy City, however, is not known; that issue is not addressed in the Book of Revelation.

Anyway, that is a possible explanation for this paradoxical situation where, apparently, there are these criminal-types dwelling in the perfect environment of the New Earth. One thing that is clear from Scripture,

there will be “*nations*” and people living on the New Earth who will need healing because they don’t have immortal bodies.

“By its light [of the Holy City] will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, and its gates will never be shut by day - and there will be no night there. They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations... The leaves of the tree [of life] were for the healing of the nations.” (Revelation 21:24-26, 22:2 - ESV)

And who are those “*nations*”, dwelling outside the City, and where do they come from? This can be a perplexing question if we were to follow the opinion that those who turn to Christ in this life will be the only ones to inhabit the Eternal Heavenly City while those who don’t turn to Christ in this life will have no other place to go but to the region of Hell.

That kind of thinking excludes any population of inhabitants for this in-between region of the New Earth. However, as was brought out in the [Post B-2](#) (“What about the ‘Left-Behind’ Folks?”), there is a sensible explanation of where these “*nations*” came from.

Christ, after His death on the Cross, “*went and preached to the spirits in prison*” by which multitudes of incarcerated souls were liberated. (1Peter 3:19) And it seems something similar will take place at the end of the Millennium. Revelation 20 describes what happens at the Great White Throne Judgment during this time just prior to the creation of the New Heaven and Earth:

“Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it... The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life, was cast into the lake of fire.” (Revelation 20:11,13-15)

This should mean that there will be vast multitudes (from all ages of humanity’s former history) who will be spared from the “*lake of fire*” judgment. As stated in a previous verse, “*The rest of the dead did not*

come to life until the thousand years were ended." (Revelation 20:5, ESV) One could read this in different ways, but the statement that the *"rest of the dead"* would *"come to life"* suggests that they are emerging from their First Death (in *Death and Hades*) to enter a realm of blessedness and peace.

That is, the majority of the *"dead"* will have their names *"written in the Book of Life"*, and there will remain but a few exceptions whose names won't be there and will have to be *"cast into the lake of fire"*. *"If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire."* (Revelation 20:15, ESV) The *"if anyone"* phrase (a newer translation) is closer to the original Greek and suggests that those who get *"cast into the lake of fire"* are comparatively few.

So if there is no more *"Death and Hades"*, then those whose names are now *"written in the Book of Life"* will have to be shifted into a new (heavenly) environment. Where will they go then? (Remember, the old heaven and earth of the Millennial Age will be gone. *"The earth and the heaven fled away"* before the face of *"Him who sat on"* the *"great white throne"* and the *"first heaven and the first earth had passed away"*.) But John the apostle's next revelation describes God's creation of *"a new heaven and a new earth"*. (Revelation 20:11, 21:1)

Presumably then, these newly released souls will enter the newly created Kingdom of God - the New Heaven and the New Earth - which, we might speculate, will be designed to accommodate vast numbers of inhabitants, those *"written in the Book of Life"*. These new citizens, registered now in the Book of Life, will also be granted entrance, or visiting rights at least, into the Heavenly City (as mentioned in the passage quoted above, [Revelation 21:24-27](#)).

They were judged according to their works and found worthy and so emerged from the Great White Throne Judgment into a new realm of blessedness and peace. They did *"wash their robes"* (Revelation 22:14, RSV); they showed positive character changes by their conduct in the purgatorial realm of *Death and Hades*.

Even though they had to miss the first Age of the Kingdom of God on Earth (the Millennium), they were found worthy to have their names

“written in the Book of Life”. And so they will become the founding citizens of the second Kingdom of God on Earth with its glorious, newly created environment of the New Heaven and New Earth.

Of these souls, it is said of them, they ***“did not come to life until the thousand years were finished.”*** (Revelation 20:5, ESV) This does not mean they were in a state of suspended animation all that time. It only means they had been living in a state of spiritual ***“death” - thanatos***: life without the joy, blessings, and privileges of Heaven (or a greatly restricted supply thereof). But at the end of the Millennium, heavenly life will be restored to them, and along with that, as implied in the ***“come to life”*** phrase, they will live again in earthly bodies on the Earth in the post-Millennial Age known as the New Heaven and New Earth.

But not all. Some will not have their names ***“written in the Book of Life”***; they will be shunted off into the ***“lake of fire which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death”***. (Revelation 20:15, 21:8)

At this stage in history, since there will be no more ***“Death and Hades”***, then the only two places left where human souls can reside will be either in the Lake of Fire or on the New Earth. And since the ***“tree of life”*** is available for the ***“healing of the nations”***, then there ***“shall be no more death”***, and therefore no more need to send anyone to a ***“Death and Hades”*** region (which was the ***“place of the dead”*** in the former age). (Revelation 22:2, 21:4)

And whoever has done his/her time in the Lake of Fire, where else can they go except onto the New Earth? If this is the case, then that may explain why there might be anyone who ***“defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie”*** and why there is some concern that no such persons should gain entrance into the Holy City. (24:27)

We may speculate even further that, if there is no more ***“Death and Hades”***, then the functions of that former domain will be carried on in the New Earth. Even in a perfect Earth, with the Heavenly City located on it, there may yet be those who are dissatisfied and in need of training and rehabilitation.

Prior to this future Age, such persons would land in Hades at death and

hopefully learn there what they hadn't been able to learn during their earthly existence. But in the New Heaven and Earth, there is no more death, so the operations and functions that used to take place in *"Death and Hades"*, presumably, will have to be taken care of by the Earth's inhabitants themselves.

And by this time too, they will be spiritually mature and strong enough to handle whatever population of former rebels or criminals may be permitted to inhabit the New Earth. Not only that, there will be the inhabitants of the Holy City who will also be of service in helping to manage operations and activities on the New Earth.

It will be a different environment then, one in which there will be no great separation of physical and spiritual realms as in our present environment - perhaps more interaction between angels and human beings. The Book of Ephesians mentions this intriguing aspect about the future: *"to bring everything together... in heaven and on earth."*

"He has showered His kindness on us, along with all wisdom and understanding. God has now revealed to us His mysterious plan... And this is the plan: At the right time He will bring everything together under the authority of Christ - everything in heaven and on earth." (Ephesians 1:8-10, NLT)

How this uniting of Heaven and Earth will affect the way human society functions and operates is difficult to imagine right now. And besides this, with no more "place of the dead" (*Hades*), then we can imagine that the social order will carry on in a very different manner to the way it does now.

There will be also the population of those who took part in the First Resurrection. As certain Scriptures explain, these people will have a type of body that can function in both physical and spiritual realms. (Whether or not, or to what degree, this privilege is extended to those who landed in *"shame and everlasting disgrace"* we don't know.)

The bodies of these First Resurrection saints will be similar to what Jesus had during His Resurrection appearances. *"The Lord Jesus Christ... will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious*

body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.” (Philippians 3:20-21)

Such bodies will enable those who have them to function easily in both domains. And they will need to as ***“kings and priests”*** who ***“shall reign on the earth [during the Millennium]”***. (Revelation 5:10) They will need to be able to harness the power of Heaven while at the same time function in the earthly environment.

And for all we know, the New Earth’s population, those who have mortal bodies, may be gifted with greater spiritual faculties. In an environment where Earth and Heaven have merged, when God will dwell with man, we can imagine that there could be many such changes - changes about which we have for now only a dim understanding.

The Bible teaches that time and eternity collided when the God-man came among us, born of a virgin. The creator of time and Lord of eternity became a human being. Humanity and divinity collided (they did not become identical), and history would never be the same again!—Michael Suderman, RZIM

The above quote applies well to our present Age. When Christ came, that marked the beginning of the Kingdom of God on Earth - a fact to which He pointed many times. We experience “divinity” or spiritual reality on a small scale now compared to how it will be experienced in the Ages to come. But as the [**parables of the leaven and of the seeds**](#) reveal, the Kingdom, even though it starts small, as a tiny bit of leaven (yeast) or as a small seed, it is destined to grow - slowly but inexorably - until it finally becomes the full, mature reality in the New Heaven and Earth. (Matthew 13:31-33; Mark 4:26-29, 30-32; Luke 13:18-21)

Regarding the apparent rehabilitation of former Lake-of-Fire inmates, we could speculate that a society where there are some of these less-than-desirable elements may be just what is needed for its citizens to learn to exercise compassion, wisdom, and understanding towards outsiders.

Those who are ready to flee the Lake of Fire will make what may seem to them like a perilous journey (crossing the borders of their own

rebellious state of mind) to enter a new state of reconciliation with the Almighty. And in the process they will certainly need lots of care, instruction, and guidance.

We might compare them in our world to foreign refugees. After deciding not to continue residing in their own conflict-ridden countries, such refugees are like the prodigal son *“when he came to his senses”*. (Luke 15:17, NIV-1984) They are ready to make desperate attempts to flee to those nations where there is peace and opportunity for a better life. To receive such newcomers requires sacrifice and compassion on the part of the host nations, and watchfulness against any undesirable elements or attitudes that may creep in.

This refugee analogy also applies well to God’s people in the present Age: they are dissatisfied with what this world has to offer. Like Abraham, they recognize that they are *“strangers and pilgrims on the earth... they seek a homeland... they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country.”* (Hebrews 11:13-16) How much better to be a seeker for the Kingdom of Heaven and its Afterlife rewards than to seek for the temporary satisfactions of this life.

(Disclaimer: The above conclusions about human society’s long-distance future, it will be admitted, do involve some guesswork. How people get into the New Earth and New Heaven, or who gets there, or why they get there, is difficult to pinpoint at this stage in human history. Hopefully, the conclusions offered above are close to reality and what the Scriptures teach. But it should be kept in mind that they are proposals, not set-in-stone certainties about humanity’s future Ages of history.)

Continue to [C-6: Lake of Fire - What Is It For?](#)