

# **Did You Know That Everyone Will Experience Either Two Births or Two Deaths?**

By Bob Wilkin

## **Introduction**

Two things are certain in life: death and taxes. Well, actually there are a lot more certainties in life, but only those who read and believe the Bible grasp them.

Except for Adam and Eve and those who die in the womb, all human beings experience physical birth. That is a given. And, except for Enoch, Elijah, and those alive at the time of the Rapture, all human beings die physically as well. The notion of physical life and physical death are universally accepted.

But the Bible actually teaches that there is a second birth and a second death as well, and that each person will experience one or the other, but not both.

## **The Second Birth and the Second Death**

Jesus told Nicodemus, “You must be born again” (John 3:5). Initially Nic thought that Jesus was talking about a second *physical* birth (John 3:4). But the Lord went out to make it plain that he was speaking of a second birth that was *spiritual* (John 3:5-13).

This spiritual birth, while clearly a second birth, is never specifically called *the second birth* in Scripture. It is variously called being *born of God* (John 1:13), being *born again* (John 3:3, 5; 1 Pet 1:23), and being *brought forth by the word of truth* (Jas 1:18).

Former President Jimmy Carter helped make the expression *born again* well known in North America. However, even among Evangelicals in North America, the expression *the second death* is even now not well known.

In the passage on the Great White Throne Judgment, where unbelievers will be judged and condemned, John says, “And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death” (NKJV). Both the Majority Text and the Critical Text actually end verse 14 with “This is the second death, the lake of fire.” In other words, the experience of the lake of fire is the experience of the second death.

Unlike John 3:3-4, here we have no one asking the obvious question, “Will a person’s heart and brain stop a second time?” No, that is not what is in view. The resurrected unbeliever will have a heart and brain and they will continue to function properly forever. The second death is not a second cessation of physical life. It is an eternal lack of spiritual life, or, conversely, the eternal experience of separation from God in the place where those who have died twice will live, the lake of fire.

## **All of This Resulted from Adam’s Sin**

God had told Adam that the day he ate of the forbidden fruit he would surely die (Gen 2:17). Prior to that day there had not been a physical or spiritual birth or death.

If Adam had not sinned, there would have been physical births, but no physical deaths. And, evidently, there would have been no spiritual births or deaths either. Prior to the fall Adam and Eve were sinless and innocent. They didn’t have eternal life and didn’t

need it. Like the angels before the fall, they had a relationship with God and that would continue forever unless they sinned. Presumably if they avoided eating the forbidden fruit for a few months or years, then God would have removed the temptation and would have simultaneously made them immune to sinning. (After Satan's rebellion, God evidently made the unfallen angels no longer capable of sinning, since the Bible tells of no further rebellion or defections in the angelic ranks.)

Eternal life in the Bible is for sinners who are the beneficiaries of the death of Jesus Christ on their behalf. Had there been no sin, Jesus would not have died and no one would have received (or needed) everlasting life.

But once sin entered the world, two options were possible for all of the descendants of Adam: the second birth or the second death. Everyone who experienced the second birth could not and would not experience the second death (cf. John 11:26, "He who lives and believes in Me shall never die [spiritually]"). Everyone who did not experience the second birth would surely experience the second death (Rev 20:14). There is no third alternative. Annihilation is not what is meant by the second death. Eternal torment in the lake of fire is.

### **Eternal Security and Eternal Insecurity**

So just as eternal security is true; so is eternal insecurity. Once a person dies in unbelief, he is certain to experience the second death, even though that second death will not occur until many years from now, after the Millennium. An unbeliever who has died is currently in Sheol, awaiting the Great White Throne Judgment and, likely not yet known by him (cf. Matt 7:21-23), certain experience of the second death, the lake of fire.

At my home church we sing the birthday song whenever anyone in the congregation had a birthday during the last week. But we add these words, "Happy birthday to you; only one will not do. Born again means salvation. We're glad you have two." (Or, if we do not know the person, then the last line is, "How many have you?")

Maybe at the funeral of a believer we should point out that the departed has experienced the first death, but that he will never experience the second death (John 11:26). Once a person experiences the second birth, the new birth, then the second death is impossible for him, regardless of what he later says, does, or even believes. There is no way to reverse the second birth. Once a person is saved, he is always saved.

### **Conclusion**

For many doctrines in Scripture there is symmetry: darkness and life, shame and boldness, the new earth and the lake of fire, blessing and cursing, freedom and bondage, and so on. The same is true with birth and death. Because of Adam's sin, there are two possible births and two possible deaths. Once a person is born, he is certain to experience at least one of the two possible deaths. But whether he experiences two deaths or two births will depend entirely on whether he believes in the Lord Jesus Christ for eternal life during his life before he dies physically. If he does not, then he will experience the second death and will never experience eternal life. But if he does believe in Jesus, then he has eternal life and will never experience the second death.

So which is it for you: two births or two deaths? If you have experienced the second birth, then thank God daily that there will never be a second death for you. That is indeed good news, wouldn't you say?