

## Article of the Month

March, 2019

### ***Second Chance?***

As human beings, we are remarkably strange. We all want second chances when we do something wrong. Yet the concept that God would give humanity a “second chance” seems to irritate so many! What is yet more confounding is that it is “Christians” who seem most bothered by this “second chance” concept. These are people who, at least in theory, are supposed to be filled with mercy and compassion.

The entire question, of course, centers around the blasphemous doctrine of eternal torment — the traditional “hell-fire” doctrine. While it can be Scripturally and conclusively demonstrated that the doctrine of eternal torment is false, God-dishonoring, and totally irrational, that is not the point of this month’s article. But the concept is at the crux of this month’s question. Those who hold dearly to this error about torment argue that if it didn’t exist, people would sin extensively — there would be no check on their misbehavior. Therefore, those who argue this way do not believe in “second chances.” It is their position that we either make it now, or we lose all opportunity for any future hope — no second chances!

First, of course, it should be noted that if people behave only because there is punishment attached to misbehavior, then they don’t love righteousness. Hence, if there were a “hell” of torment, they would go there anyway BECAUSE they don’t love righteousness. What kind of a God would save you because you behave only because you have to? What kind of thinking IS this?

Not that it is important, but the threat of torment doesn’t seem to have cut down on bad behavior. Statistics show that “Christian” nations have more people imprisoned than heathen lands. Apparently the hell-fire threat doesn’t do much.

#### WHAT IS THE BIBLICAL “SECOND CHANCE?”

The Scriptural testimony is that God has permitted evil so that humanity can learn from it — so that they can ULTIMATELY (not now) choose to do right because right is beautiful, refreshing, and for the best of all beings. Some of the human race have been given a beforehand opportunity to dedicate themselves to righteousness. But it isn’t that everyone else will suffer throughout eternity because they haven’t had that opportunity. Those who have had it have gained some special privileges in advance. Thus, the “Body of Christ,” (the “Seed of Abraham”) will be given a special resurrection — a “First Resurrection” — which will give them a spirit resurrection with the needed powers to

## Return to 2019 Index

“bless all the families of the earth.” (Genesis 12:3) Likewise, the faithful of Old Testament times will be given a “better resurrection” (Hebrews 11:35) which will allow them to become “Princes in all the earth” — visible (earthly and human) representatives of the Heavenly Kingdom, who will administer the distribution of blessings here on the earth. (Psalm 45:16 and Matthew 8:11).

The 1000 years (the Millennium of Revelation 20 and of II Peter 3) of Christ’s reign IS A SECOND CHANCE for the human race. It is then that mankind receives the opportunity (the “second chance,” if you will,) to “hear that prophet” (Acts 3:21-23) and to reform. The entire Biblical story is based on this concept of a “second chance.” When Adam fell, the promises of a second chance began: The seed of the woman would bruise the serpent’s head (Genesis 3:15); The seed of Abraham would bless all the families of the earth (Genesis 22:18); The Messiah would come and establish a government of peace and restoration of life on the earth (Isaiah 9:6); The “Church” (the “Bride of Christ”) would reign with him for a thousand years and bring back the dead who would gain life by what their works WILL THEN BE (Revelation 20:4, 12). The testimony is incessant, consistent, and the very theme of Biblical prophecy. If there is no second chance for the race, there is no Bible!

As just one example of the Scriptural position on “second chances,” we have Jesus’ own words that Sodom and (even the less-deserving) Capernaum (Matthew 11:23 and 24) will have varying degrees of a “tolerable” experience in reforming once they return and the kingdom will THEN be judging them — NOT for their past, but for their progress during the Kingdom of Christ. The varying “tolerable” nature of their resurrection process will be determined by their character development IN THIS LIFE. Hence, Sodom (which didn’t know better) will find reformation much more easily than Capernaum (which was INFORMED of good, but was not in sympathy with it.)

It is IMPORTANT to realize that God is NOT EXCUSING mankind’s disobedience. He is not giving a “second chance” in the sense that He’s saying, “Oh well! You sinned; but let’s ignore it this time, and let’s give you another chance.” THAT is not the case at all. God’s inviolable attribute of justice would not permit such a casual attitude toward disobedience. It is because God “cannot deny Himself” (II Timothy 2:13) — He cannot violate the perfections and balances of His Justice, Wisdom, Love, and Power — that God arranged to have the original sin PAID FOR. He supplied His Son, Jesus, to be “a RANSOM for all to be testified in due time.” (I Timothy 2:5, 6) God arranged to purchase the race out of the condemnation of death. This purchase DOES GIVE a SECOND CHANCE. Mankind FAILED the FIRST CHANCE in Eden. We all died in Adam (I Corinthians 15:22 — the FIRST chance); but in Christ (I Corinthians 15:21, 22 — the SECOND chance) shall all be made alive.

Return to 2019 Index

THE REAL “FIRST CHANCE”

What some might call a “second chance” is, in actuality, a first chance. We might well call it a “FAIR CHANCE.” Since all of mankind has been born in imperfection (Psalm 51:5; Romans 3:10), they are not in a position to have a real first chance in this life. If salvation were in this life, most of mankind could not possibly have taken advantage of it. After all, Scripture states that salvation IS NOT POSSIBLE except through Jesus. (See Acts 4:12.) But a great proportion of the race was born BEFORE Jesus ever came on the scene. And, even AFTER Jesus came on the scene, most of the race has never even heard of him! Christianity has been and is a MINORITY RELIGION, and most of it has been “nominally Christian” — a fake representation of what Jesus has taught. By these statistics alone, the vast majority of the race has had NO CHANCE. Consequently, when they return from the grave, they will have their REAL “FIRST CHANCE” — even though many might call it a “second chance.”

Finding salvation IN THIS LIFE might really be called “a chance” (in the sense of an unlikely gambling windfall) because it is nearly impossible that the standards for salvation have come before any except a very few of humanity during this lifetime. (Obviously, THAT is not what this article means by “chance.” We are really dealing with a second “opportunity.”) Even those who have had the Gospel spoken near them or to them may well not have had the capacity nor the state of mind to accept it. Right now, humanity is in no shape to “listen” or to comprehend.

God doesn’t play “by chance!” He has designed His own plan for the salvation of the race. He wills “that all men be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth.” (I Timothy 2:3, 4) Please note that sequence! Salvation comes BEFORE knowledge! Men will be saved from the grave **before** they ever hear the needed information for salvation.

Some, by God’s design, (Jesus’ “Church”) have found salvation before the promised kingdom comes. This is noted by the Apostle Paul when he writes that “God is the Savior of ALL men, SPECIALLY of those that believe.” (I Timothy 4:10) This shows unmistakably that UNBELIEVERS are saved; but some blessed few have a “special salvation” before the remainder of the race. Those who obtain salvation early as part of the “Body of Christ” will be blessed to be part of the “Seed of Abraham” which will bless “ALL the families of the earth.” That will be the time of the “second chance” for the race which failed in its “first chance” in Eden. But for nearly all the race, it will truly be their first real individual opportunity to obtain life everlasting. While a few will fail that “chance” (OPPORTUNITY), the vast majority will gain that eternal life which GOD WANTS to have happen. Humanity will joyfully walk up the “Highway of Holiness” (Isaiah 35:8-10) and obtain “joy everlasting.”

“Thy Kingdom come!”