

WHERE DO UNBELIEVERS GO WHEN THEY DIE?

October 11, 2019

In Hades [the rich man] lifted up his eyes, being in torment.

-Luke 16:23

What happens to unbelievers when they die? Just as believers have a current destination (the third Heaven) and a future destination (the New Heaven and Earth), so there is a temporary and eternal destination for the unsaved. The unsaved immediately go to a place called Hades. Luke 16:23-24 says, "In Hades [the rich man] lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried out and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame.'" Hades is the temporary waiting place of the unsaved dead. It is a place of torment that begins the moment an unbeliever dies. That is where the unbelievers go right now, but that is not their final destination.

Their final destination is the Lake of Fire. In Revelation 20:12-15, John said, "I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire." The Lake of Fire is a place of forever suffering.

When an unbeliever dies, he goes immediately to this terrible place called Hades. The common experience in both the temporary location, Hades, and the ultimate place for the unsaved, the Lake of Fire, is physical pain. Notice in Luke 16:24, the rich man says he is in agony because of the flames. Right now, those who die without Christ are in Hades awaiting their final judgment, the Great White Throne Judgment. And at that judgment Hades will be emptied and all the unsaved who have ever lived will stand before God. And because their names are not written in the Lamb's Book of Life, they will be judged by their deeds. That is a choice they made in this life. On that day, every unbeliever will see that his works do not meet the standard of perfect righteousness that God requires and understand why he has been sentenced to the Lake of Fire.

Here is the basic truth everyone needs to understand: when we die we immediately begin experiencing God's blessing or God's judgment. While it is true that at some future day believers will change location from the third Heaven to the New Heaven, and unbelievers will also change location from Hades into the Lake of Fire, a change of location is not the same as a change of eternal destiny. Heaven and Hell are eternal choices. If you wait until you die to choose your destination, you will have waited one second too long. Hell and Heaven are forever choices.

Today's devotion is excerpted from "Do Christians Immediately Go To Heaven When They Die?" by Dr. Robert Jeffress, 2016.