

After: Eternity is for Real

What Happens After a Person Dies Without Christ?

Luke 16:19-31

Intro. Jane: “I’ll be dead in 4 months. I’ve been a horrible person my whole life. I’m convinced I will wake up in hell. Is anyone in my situation?” *Cancer Research Web Forum in UK*. Many responses like this one: “Hell is a human construct, not a divine one. A way that allowed the early church to build up its power on earth: tell everyone you’re damned unless you follow our path and join our church. It’s really a massive con job - a type of existential blackmail. No just god is going to condemn a person to eternal, infinite punishment for finite crimes.”

The Bible is crystal clear that death, there are only two destinations: **Heaven or Hell**. Jesus spoke about both of these realities, but interestingly, He spoke more often about Hell than Heaven. Most people say that if there is an afterlife, they are fairly certain that they have lived a good enough life to get into Heaven, and if there is a place called Hell, they are also fairly certain they’ve lived a good enough life to avoid Hell.

Today, we want to look at the reality of Hell and what happens after a person dies without Christ.

STUDY: A recent study...among professing Christians, **only 35%** believed in a literal place called Hell.

LUTZER: Erwin Lutzer, *One Minute After You Die*: “Thus millions of Westerners believe in some kind of afterlife, but it is one of bliss, not misery. Genuine fear of suffering in hell has vanished from the mainstream of Western thought. Few, if any, give prolonged thought to the prospect that some people will be in hell. Fewer yet believe they themselves will be among the unfortunate number.”

TRIVIAL VIEW: People in our culture have taken a trivial view of hell anyway. We use the word hell as a joke or in anger as profanity. If you believe in Hell at all as a follower of Christ, you will not trivialize or make hell a byword. Hell is real and Hell is eternal.

TWO TOOLS: Two of Satan’s greatest tools and Unbeliever’s most used coping mechanisms are the beliefs of:

- a) Universalism – the belief that all people go to heaven
- b) Annihilationism – the belief that hell is not eternal, you only cease to exist. (Aionios – eternal)

Let me answer the question we are posing as a summary statement and way for us to understand why we can say this: **What happens one moment after a person dies without Christ?**

- I. **The Reason for Hell - Why Hell Exists – Because God prepared it for those who choose to live in their own righteousness.**
 - A. **Matthew 25:41** Hell was prepared for the devil and his angels (rebelled/rejected)
 - B. **Hab. 1:13** says that God is so pure that He cannot look at evil and cannot look at wrong.
 - C. **Rom. 1:18** says, “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.”

One definition: “Hell is the place of eternal exile where the ungodly experience God’s righteous retribution against sin, or put another way, hell is the expression of God’s settled, eternal, unchanging wrath against sin...He is the righteous character of God.” @ God’s character is perfectly balanced between His love and His righteousness – **Rom. 11:22** speaks of the kindness and severity of God

III. All of us have a built-in sense of justice and know that evil cannot go unpunished. For example, what do you do when you see a ROACH in your kitchen? Scream...Squish it! Zero tolerance for roaches! God deals with sin out of His love, as much as out of his righteousness. He does not want sin to multiply and dirty up our lives until it takes over!

II. **The Realities of Hell - What Hell Is and Who is There** – We need to look at the teaching of Hell from *two perspectives*:

- A. **Physical** - Hell is a Literal, Physical Place – literal place, not a frame of mind. Jesus describes...
- Jesus described hell as the fiery pit, a lake burning with fire, a place where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, outer darkness that is eternal, and a place with no peace (Is. 48:22 says, “There is no peace for the wicked.”)
 - Hell is where, as **Lutzer** put it: “your raw soul is joined to an indestructible body, exposed to its own sin for eternity.” In the resurrection, those souls in Hell will also get a new body equipped for eternal Hell.
 - One writer describes **Hell as spiritual ALCATRAZ** – locked away, experiencing different degrees of Hell, able to see the lights and activity of Heaven but never able to escape.
 - **Those in Hell have no excuse.** Jesus said in **Matthew 7:21** “Not everyone who says to Me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of My Father who is in Heaven. On that day many will say to Me, “Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name’. And then I will declare to them, I never knew you, depart from me...”.
- B. **Mental** - Hell is a Choice - the choice to live in eternal existence with who you truly love (Luke 16:19-23) – *TWO observations: (1) Rich man was given NO NAME by Jesus. (2) Rich man never asks to get out of Hell, (only for Lazarus to come to Hell!)*

In his commentary of this passage, Tim Keller asks: “What is it that gives you a sense of who you are? Whatever is the best thing, the highest thing that gives you a sense of value, that’s what gives you an identity. This man, now, had his good things...status and wealth were the basis for his identity, and now that the status and wealth is gone, there is no him left. He was a rich man or nothing.” **Keller points to Soren Kierkegaard’s definition of sin: “Sin is building your identity on anything other than God.” It’s making the good things in our life Ultimate things!**

C.S. Lewis in *Mere Christianity and The Problem with Pain*: “Christianity asserts that every individual human being is going to live forever, and this must either be true or false. Now there are a good many things which would not be worth bothering about if I were going to live only seventy years, but which I had better bother about very seriously if I am going to live forever. Perhaps my bad temper or my jealousy are gradually getting worse—so gradually that the increase in seventy years will not be very noticeable. But it might be absolute hell in a million years: in fact, if Christianity is true, Hell is the precisely correct technical term for what it would be...”. Lewis is saying that the **MENTAL**, Conscious part of Hell is not regret for living a bad life, but an eternal realization of the REAL person Christ was always trying to redeem but you chose to embrace. You tried to change, your own way, but had no lasting

power because the issues of your heart and character are not fixed through self-help courses, education or will power. Your deeper issue is one of transformation which only comes through the work of the Holy Spirit in your through faith in Jesus Christ. Lewis continues...

Hell begins with a grumbling mood, always complaining, always blaming others... but you are still distinct from it. You may even criticize it in yourself and wish you could stop it. But there may come a day when you can no longer. Then there will be no you left to criticize the mood or even to enjoy it, but just the grumble itself, going on forever like a machine. It is not a question of God "sending us" to hell. In each of us there is something growing, which will BE hell unless it is nipped in the bud." AND, this is why Lewis makes this chilling statement: I willingly believe that the damned are, in one sense, successful, rebels to the end; **that the doors of hell are locked on the inside** . . . they enjoy forever the horrible freedom they have demanded, and are therefore self-enslaved..."

You see Hell is not **God's dungeon of horrors**, unleashed on good people who would otherwise be in heaven except for a few slip ups along the way and a God who has zero tolerance. People are not scratching the walls of Hell to get out as God is kicking them back down...No, Hell is your choice based on your identity in something other than God going on forever.

Lewis wraps up his thoughts on hell with this:

"In the long run the answer to all those who object to the doctrine of hell, is itself a question: What are you asking God to do? To wipe out their past sins and, at all costs, to give them a fresh start, smoothing every difficulty and offering every miraculous help? But He has done so, on Calvary. To forgive them? They will not be forgiven. To leave them alone? Alas, I am afraid that is what He does. There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God they will be done in those to whom God says they will be done. All who are in he'll choose it without that it wouldn't be hell."

III. The Revelation of God's Amazing Love through Hell – What keeps a person from Hell (16:27-31)

A. Not the Fear of Hell – (16:27-31)

- Our problem is not a lack of evidence! @ **Agnostic neighbor, "If you could prove there was a God beyond a shadow of a doubt, it still would not matter"**.
- Our problem is not a need for miracles (which raising Lazarus would have been)
- The solution is not being more afraid of Hell. Our problem is that we cannot get ourselves out of the way! Self-centeredness is the real issue! We want to do better and we make strides but for some reason we cannot make it stick! So, we make excuses, "I'm only human, born to make mistakes." (The Human League – 80s).
- Nothing will move our hearts, not even the knowledge that Jesus Himself has risen from the dead "if someone goes to them from the dead" ...Jesus rose, but that in itself is not what changes our hearts and transforms us from self-centered to Christ-centered. Then what is it?

B. But the Amazing Love of God through Jesus Christ! (v. 29 "They have Moses and the Prophets")

What does this mean? In **Genesis 22** there is the story of Abraham taking Isaac to Mt. Moriah (on the same ridge line many years later, there would be the real sacrifice, Jesus Christ who would climb that hill and take upon Himself the sin of all humanity). **Why did Jesus do this? "He who knew no sin..." ----- If you don't believe in Hell, you can NEVER truly know the love of God!** Why? Because what God did to deliver you from Hell was take Hell on Himself in your place! This is the Gospel! This is why you can experience Heaven!