

What Happens When a Person Dies? Death and the Unbeliever

I. Personal Eschatology

- A. Today, we begin looking at what happens when a person dies.
 - 1. But what is the foundation for such beliefs?
 - 2. If we are to know what happens after death, it must be revealed to us by the Author of the story.

- B. (Some) Reasons for Studying Personal Eschatology¹
 - 1. God has revealed these future events to us.
 - 2. Believers should gain great hope from understanding these events (Rom. 8:24-25).
 - 3. We gain endurance in the present life (Rom. 8:25).
 - 4. It encourages us to live holy (set apart to God's glory) lives (2 Pet 3:11-12).
 - 5. It helps us properly value what matters (Ps. 90).
 - 6. A motive to share the gospel (Heb. 9:27, Rom. 10:14-15).
 - 7. It gives more fuel to our worship of God (1 Cor. 15:54-57).

II. The Intermediate State

- A. "Intermediate state" - What happens after you die and before the resurrection of your body.

- B. Some terms related to death and the intermediate state:
 - 1. *Fallen asleep*– the body is dead, the soul is alive (Jn. 11:11-12, 1 Thess 4:13-15).
 - 2. *Sheol*, a Hebrew word that refers to death and the intermediate state (Ps. 89:48, Ps. 88).
 - 3. *Hades*, a Greek word referring to death (Acts 2:27) and/or a place where the soul (of unbelievers) goes prior to hell (Rev. 20:13-15).

III. What Happens to an Unbeliever at Death?

- A. The rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31)
 - 1. In context, it is directed against the rich, religious leaders who are hypocrites (see vv. 1-13).
 - 2. What do we learn about what happens after these men die?
 - a. The poor (righteous) man goes to a place a blessing (22).
 - b. The rich man (hypocrite) suffers (24) and is forever separated from the Lord's blessings (v. 26).

- B. The men crucified alongside Christ (Luke 23:39-44)
 - 1. One who repented was told, "Today you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43).
 - 2. The other who didn't repent was told no such thing.

- C. There is no "second chance" after death (Heb. 9:27, Prov. 11:7).

IV. How should we think about / talk about unbelievers who have died?

- A. Deep sorrow, with no false hopes that they are "in a better place" (Rom. 9:1-2).
- B. Agree with God's justice and righteousness in his final disposition toward them (Heb. 9:27).
- C. Be thankful for their good qualities and common graces they enjoyed in life (2 Sam. 1:17-25).

¹ Adapted from Bruce Ware's talk, "Session 1: What Happens When You Die?" Accessed at <https://www.gcot.org/sermons-specials/bible-conferences/2014-fall-bible-conference/>