

CROSSWINDSWHAT HAPPENS ONE MINUTE
AFTER WE DIE?

Have you attended funerals of both believers and nonbelievers? If so, did you note differences between the services?

SERMON REVIEW

Death is the consequence of Adam's and Eve's disobedience in the garden of Eden. God warned that if they ate the forbidden fruit, they would die. And die they did. They died spiritually in that they were separated from God and tried to hide from Him. They also began to die physically, as their bodies began the journey to the grave. And if Adam and Eve had not been redeemed by God, they would have died eternally, which is the third form of death. From the original disobedience in Eden, death in all its forms began its trek throughout the world.

The most important word in the Old Testament that speaks of the afterlife is the Hebrew word Sheol. There is a clear distinction between the grave, where the body rests, and Sheol, where the spirits of the dead gather.

In the New Testament, we find Sheol translated by the Greek word Hades. The New Testament pulls back the curtain so that we can see into Hades (or Sheol) with more clarity. Here we are given some very specific details about what Hades is like, both for those who die as believers as well as those who die as unbelievers.

So far we have learned that death has two faces: to the unbeliever the very thought of death is terrifying, or at least it should be. But for those who have made their peace with God through Jesus, death is a blissful eternity.

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Read Luke 16:16-31. Have each member of the group comment on a particular characteristic of the account that stood out for them. What did you collectively learn about Hades in this passage?

Assume the role of Lazarus and describe the emotions he experienced; then do the same with the rich man. Consider the importance of this story for understanding the hereafter.

Focus on Luke 16:31. In what way is the statement of this man even more relevant for us than it was in Jesus' day?

Why is the doctrine of purgatory faulty theology?

How you have created little earthly purgatories by not extending complete forgiveness to others and making them continue suffering for their sin by rehearsing old sins and failures of the past?

How would you advise someone who fears death?

DIGGING DEEPER

Perhaps one of the most important passages on how believers should approach death is found in Philippians 1:19–26. Here Paul said that for him to die was not a loss but a “gain.” To be with Christ was “far better.” This kind of faith was so prevalent among the early believers that the pagans said, “The Christians carry their dead as if in triumph!” May that be true of us also.

How forward-looking are you?