

What Happens After Death?

A Biblical Ordo Eschatos



The Intermediate State

Common Aberrant Views

Soul Sleep

- Anabaptists, Socinians, Seventh Day Adventists
- **Definition:** the soul continues to exist after death but only in an unconscious state of rest. The soul will become conscious again at the resurrection.

Soul Sleep

- **Defense:**
 - 1) Scripture often presents death as sleep (e.g., Matt. 9:24; 1 Cor. 15:51; 1 Th. 4:13).
 - 2) Certain passages seem to teach that the dead are unconscious.
 - Ps. 6:5 – For there is no mention of You in death; In Sheol who will give You thanks?
 - Ps. 115:17 – The dead do not praise the LORD, Nor *do* any who go down into silence;
 - Eccl. 9:10 – Whatever your hand finds to do, do *it* with *all* your might; for there is no activity or planning or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol where you are going.
 - Is. 38:19 – "It is the living who give thanks to You, as I do today.
 - 3) Practically, and scientifically, conscious thought is tied to the physical brain; when it dies, thought is impossible.

Soul Sleep

- **Rebuttal:**
 - 1) Because of a preponderance of Scriptural evidence, *sleep* when used of death must be a metaphor of a dead body, not the cessation of consciousness.
 - 2) All the passages that seem to teach the dead are unconscious are in context merely arguing that once death comes, we can no longer participate in the activities of this world.
 - Cf. Ps. 115:17 – The dead do not praise the LORD, Nor *do* any who go down into silence;
 - Ps. 115:18 – But as for us, we will bless the LORD From this time forth and forever. Praise the LORD!
 - 3) The brain is simply a vehicle for the soul. The physical brain may merely transmit thought, so thought exists independent of the brain.

Purgatory

- **Definition:** at the death, the souls of those who are perfectly pure are admitted to heaven or to the beatific vision of God. Those who still carry the guilt of venial sins and have not endured the temporal punishment those sins deserve must go through a lengthy process of cleansing.
- Ludwig Ott (RC theologian): "Suffrages operate in such a manner that the satisfactory value of the good works is offered to God in substitution for the temporal punishments for sins which the poor souls still have to render. It operates by way of remission of temporal punishments due to sins."

Purgatory

- A place of suffering
- Can be alleviated by the living:
 - Prayers on behalf of the dead
 - Good works
 - Taking the mass
 - Indulgences

Purgatory

- **Defense:**
 - Primary: 2 Maccabees 12:42-45 – and gave themselves to prayer, begging that the sin committed might be completely forgiven. Next, the valiant Judas urged the soldiers to keep themselves free from all sin, having seen with their own eyes the effects of the sin of those who had fallen; 43 after this he took a collection from them individually, amounting to nearly two thousand drachmas, and sent it to Jerusalem to have a sacrifice for sin offered, an action altogether fine and noble, prompted by his belief in the resurrection. 44 For had he not expected the fallen to rise again, it would have been superfluous and foolish to pray for the dead, 45 whereas if he had in view the splendid recompense reserved for those who make a pious end, the thought was holy and devout. Hence, he had this expiatory sacrifice offered for the dead, so that they might be released from their sin.
- Secondary:
 - Matt. 5:26; 12:32; 1 Cor. 3:15; 2 Tim. 1:18

Purgatory

- **Rebuttal:**
 - Nowhere in the canonical Scriptures is this idea taught.
 - In fact, it contradicts the clear teaching of Scripture on several fronts:
 - The sufficient sacrifice of Christ for sins, once for all (Heb. 1:3; 9:26; 10:12).
 - That we can add to the completed work of Christ.
 - That temporal suffering can expiate sin.
 - The joy and happiness of the departed believer (Rev. 14:13)
 - This passage from Maccabees even contradicts what RC theology tries to make it teach.

Limbo

- **Limbus**, which means "fringe" or "border"
- 1) **Limbus Infantum**
 - **Definition:** a place on the fringes of hell, where the suffering and fires don't reach and where all unbaptized children will be kept eternally.
 - No "pain of sense" or positive punishment.
 - Full natural happiness and naturally love and know God
 - Forever excluded from the presence of God

Limbo

- **Defense:**
 - John 3:5 – unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.
- **Rebuttal:**
 - John 3:5 is not talking about water baptism.
 - Utter conjecture.
 - Contrary to the character of God.
 - Contrary to the attitude of Christ.

Limbo

2) Limbus Patrum

- **Definition:** the place where OT saints were the souls of OT saints were kept until the resurrection of Christ.
- Jews referred to this place as Abraham's bosom (Luke 16:23) and Paradise (Luke 23:43)
- Christ descended into Hades, the place where all the dead dwell, which is divided into two compartments.
- One compartment is a place of suffering for the wicked, and the other a place of joy for the righteous.
- And out of the righteous compartment Jesus took the souls of the righteous back to heaven.
- Protestants: the two compartment theory

Limbo

Defense:

- Christ's "descent into hell", based loosely on two primary passages:
 - Eph. 4:8-9 – "WHEN HE ASCENDED ON HIGH, HE LED CAPTIVE A HOST OF CAPTIVES, AND HE GAVE GIFTS TO MEN." 9 (Now this *expression*, "He ascended," what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth?
 - 1 Pet. 3:19 – He went and made proclamation to the spirits *now* in prison.

Limbo

Rebuttal:

- According to historian Philip Schaff, the part of the Apostles' Creed "he descended into hell" wasn't added until 650 AD.
- Eph. 4:7-10
- 1 Pet. 3:19 – "in the spirit also he went and made proclamation to the spirits *now* in prison."
- Enoch (Gen. 5:24) and Elijah (2 Kings 2:11) are both swept away into God's presence, not some temporary holding facility.
- Matt. 17:3 – behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him.
- Luke 23:46 – Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, "Father, INTO YOUR HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT."

The Scriptural View

The Biblical Words

Sheol

- In the Hebrew OT 65x
- Used in a variety of ways:
 - Place of the wicked dead (Job 21:13; Ps. 9:17; 31:17; 49:14; 55:15; 139:8; Pr. 5:5; 9:18; 15:24; 23:14)
 - The Grave (the place of the dead, both good and evil)
 - E.g., Gen. 37:35; 42:38; 44:29, 31; Job 17:13; Ps. 16:10; Pr. 9:18; Is. 38:10
 - Dominant OT usage
 - The place where their bodies go but not their souls.

The Biblical Words

Hades

- Occurs in the Greek NT 10x
- Equivalent to OT Sheol (LXX almost always uses Hades to translate Sheol)
- Also used in two different ways:
 - A place when referring to punishment
 - Hell
 - Matt. 11:23; Luke 10:15; 16:23
 - The state of death which both believers and unbelievers enter when life is over
 - The grave
 - Matt. 16:18; Acts 2:27, 31; Rev. 1:18; 6:8; 20:13, 14

The Biblical Arguments

■ Key passages

- Matt. 22:32 (cf. Ex. 3:6)
- Luke 16:19-31
 - Sensations of suffering
 - Awareness of circumstances (23-24)
 - Memory of the past (27-28)
 - Rational thought (30)
 - Communication with other spirits
- 2 Cor. 5:1-8
- Phil. 1:23
- Rev. 6:9-11

The Biblical Arguments

■ Other passages

- Gen. 5:24 – Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.
- 2 Kings 2:11 – Elijah went up by a whirlwind to heaven.
- Luke 23:43 – He said to him, "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise."
- Heb. 12:23 – to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of *the* righteous made perfect.
- Passages which present a different exit for body and soul...
 - Ps. 146:4 – His spirit departs, he returns to the earth.
 - Eccl. 12:7 – the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it.
 - Matt. 10:28 – "Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul."

The Actual Conditions

- Temporary (1 Cor. 15:52)
- Without a body (2 Cor. 5:1-8)
- Distinct
 - Unsaved – suffering (Luke 16:23)
 - Saved
 - Immediately in the presence of the Lord (Luke 23:43; 2 Cor. 5:8)
 - Bliss and joy (Luke 16:25; Phil. 1:23; 2 Cor. 5:8)
- Ends with the resurrection of the body

The Implications

- There are no second chances after death.
 - Second Probation
 - One's eternal state is fixed at death
 - Luke 16:26 – between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, so that those who wish to come over from here to you will not be able, and *that* none may cross over from there to us.'
 - John 8:21 – He said again to them, "I go away, and you will seek Me, and will die in your sin; where I am going, you cannot come."
 - 2 Pet. 2:4 – if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment... **9** the Lord knows how ... to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment.
 - Jude 13 – [false teachers are like] wandering stars, for whom the black darkness has been reserved forever.

The Implications

- The intermediate state is better than life here.
 - Phil. 1:23 – "I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for *that* is very much better."
 - Unmixed, undiminished, unending joy
 - Ps. 16:11 – In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.
 - Loving fellowship
 - 1 Cor. 13:13 – now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love.
 - Sinless perfection
 - Heb. 12:22-23 – you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, 23 to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of *the* righteous made perfect.
 - The presence of Jesus Christ
 - Phil. 1:23 – I am hard-pressed from both *directions*, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for *that* is very much better.
 - 2 Cor. 5:8 – we are of good courage. I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.