

LIFE AFTER DEATH

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Death is the final chapter of life. The Bible notes only two people who did not experience death and they were Enoch and Elijah. The truth is that all of us are going to die. (Hebrews 9:27) None of us knows when we are going to die. The greater question is, "Is there life after death"? The Bible gives us four places that we can enter after death. I believe we will experience two of them before the judgment and two of them are our final destination after the judgment.

Many people know about heaven and hell but few of us want to talk about the final destination after life. Many people at funerals believe that their departed loved ones are with God automatically but this is a fallacy. Our faithfulness to God will determine whether we will live eternally with Him. Heaven is our reward for our faithfulness. For those who choose to rebel against God, there is an eternal punishment called hell which is a topic many want to avoid.

It is my conviction that after death our souls are at rest and separate from the body. For the faithful we will rest in a place called paradise. The unfaithful souls will rest in a place called Hades. Paradise and Hades are not permanent places but temporary until the Day of Judgment. Let us examine each of these places as recorded in scripture.

1. Paradise is a place for the righteous who have accepted Jesus Christ. It is a resting place they enter before the general resurrection. It is a peaceful place. (Luke 23: 43)
2. Hades is an intermediate state between death and the resurrection of the dead. The soul does not sleep in unconsciousness but exists in unhappiness or misery. (Luke 16:23)
3. Hell is the receptacle of the damned and accursed. It is a place of suffering, pain, fire and eternal torment after the judgment. (Psalm 9: 17)
4. Heaven is where the righteous will receive their eternal reward after the judgment. It is a beautiful place of peace where we will enjoy God's presence forever. (Psalm 19:1)

Purgatory for the Catholic Church is a transitional time of cleansing after death. It is a prerequisite of hell, suffering and torment. They believe in penitence to release persons from purgatory into heaven. There is no scripture to support this theology.

The Last Day is when Jesus will return and He will judge both the living and the dead. Every eye shall see Him and every tongue will confess Him. (Philippians 2:10-11; I Thessalonians 4:13-18)

The final judgment is when every one of our thoughts, words and deeds will be known and judged. This will be a permanent separation of the evil and good; the righteous and the wicked. (Revelation 20: 12; 21:27)

Hades is a prerequisite of hell and paradise is a prerequisite of heaven. Paradise and Hades are places that we rest after death and before the judgment while hell is the punishment after the judgment and heaven the reward after the judgment.

It is not logical for God to take us to heaven or hell after death, return to earth for the second coming and judgment, and then send us back to heaven after the judgment. I believe that after death the righteous will be in the presence of our Lord in paradise until the final trumpet call. After the judgement we will receive our eternal reward in heaven. Likewise the wicked will go to a place called Hades and experience the same type of pain and suffering that we experienced in our lifetime until the judgment. After the judgment they will be banished to hell which is a place of eternal torment.

While the Bible does not give a vivid description of Paradise and Hades, it does give a description of Heaven and Hell. Jesus describes hell as everlasting fire. (Matthew 25:41, 46) Hades could be revealed in the following Scriptures. (Revelation 20: 13-14) Paradise is where the Father abides. (John 14:2) Heaven is described as a place beautifully decorated and peaceful. (Revelation 21: 18-27; 22: 1-5)

Our choices in life will determine where we spend eternity: life after death in a temporary place called Hades or Paradise until the judgement. The judgement will determine our eternal punishment called Hell or the place of reward called Heaven.