

1. Introduction

From the earliest times of recorded history, human beings have wondered about life after death.

Will our souls live forever?

Will we have bodies of some sort?

Will we retain our individual minds?

The only reliable answers to these questions come from God's revelation in Scripture. Of course, the Bible doesn't tell us everything we might want to know. And sometimes Christians interpret its words very differently. But we all agree that Scripture gives us great hope for a glorious future in the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This lesson on "The Living and the Dead" is in three parts.

First, we'll see what the Bible says about the present state of human life.

Second, we'll look at the intermediate state that begins when we die.

And third, we'll consider our final state at the consummation of the eschaton.

2. A Definition

In this lesson, we'll focus on a subcategory of eschatology called individual eschatology.

Individual eschatology is:

The study of how individual human beings experience the events of the last days;

— especially with regard to life, death, the intermediate state, and the final state of our bodies and souls.

Further, in this lesson, we will focus only on the unregenerate souls.

3. The Present State: Unregenerate Death

Humanity currently lives during the last days, also known as "the eschaton." As a result, we all suffer the hardships of this age, like sin and death. But these problems are partially alleviated by the blessings of the age to come, like forgiveness and salvation.

In humanity's present state, believers, or "the regenerate," experience the effects of both ages simultaneously, while unbelievers or "the unregenerate" overwhelmingly experience the hardships of this age.

In theology, the term "regenerate" means "recreated" or "reborn." So, we could refer to those who are regenerate as the spiritually "living." It follows then, that the theological term "unregenerate" means "not recreated" or "not reborn."

In other words, the unregenerate are spiritually "dead."

In light of this distinction, we'll address humanity's present state in two parts.

First, in this lesson we'll consider those who are unregenerate. And **second**, in another lesson, we'll turn to those who are regenerate. This lesson will address **ONLY** the unregenerate. Let's begin with the present state of the unregenerate.

Scripture tells us that fallen human beings are born spiritually dead. The unregenerate **remain in this state** of spiritual death because they haven't been renewed or "**regenerated**" by the Holy Spirit.

We'll focus on three characteristics of the unregenerate: first, their spiritual death; second, their moral inability; and third, their enmity with God.

a. Spiritual Death

It's tempting to think of spiritual death in ways that parallel physical death. But this can be a little misleading. When we die physically, our souls are separated from our bodies. Our bodies are incapable of independent action, and eventually decay to the point that they return to dust.

But when we're dead spiritually, our souls are still active in our bodies. The unregenerate continue to think, feel, dream, make choices, and engage with the world in almost every way the regenerate do. They aren't robots, nor are they mindless bodies.

So, what exactly is **spiritual death**?

Here's a quote from Rev. George Shamblin:

When we think about spiritual death, I'm reminded back in the Garden. It's really interesting when we look at the Old Testament, especially in Genesis, where God had told Adam, he says, "Of any tree of the garden you may eat." Some translations in English and other languages will say, "You may freely eat... Clearly God was saying, "You can eat until your heart's desire. You eat all you want.

But there's this one tree, and if you eat from that tree ..." — as I say — "You will be as dead as a doornail." So clearly, God said that as soon as Adam ate of that fruit that he would die, not only physically, but spiritually as well.

All throughout the Old Testament we see the horrible wages of sin. Even in the New Testament, Paul is going to talk about that spiritual death. We're going to see verses such as "The wages of sin is death"... Another verse I love is "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"...

It's so important to understand that sin has separated me from God, that sin has caused all sorts of trouble. When I first understand that I have sinned, and I've fallen short, then I think, "What can I do? Where can I turn?"

—That's when the gospel comes in!

In the beginning, God created Adam and Eve **with spiritual life**.

So where did spiritual death come from? The short answer is: **God**.

When Adam and Eve rebelled against God in the Garden of Eden, God cursed humanity with spiritual death.

In Genesis 2:17, God said to Adam:

You must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die (Genesis 2:17).

But as we learn in Genesis 3, Satan spoke through the serpent and tricked Eve into eating the fruit. And after Adam saw that Eve had eaten it and lived, he ate some too. Then, according to the terms of the covenant God had made with Adam, **God cursed them.**

They didn't die that day, at least not physically, but they became **spiritually corrupt.** And this **spiritual corruption is the essence of spiritual death.** In Romans 7:14-25, Paul referred to this as our "**sinful nature.**" He described it by saying that sin lives inside our very bodies and even takes control of our minds.

Worse, **spiritual death affects all the naturally conceived descendants of Adam and Eve.**

Passages like John 3:5-7, Romans 8:10, and Colossians 2:13 indicate that **every human being,** except for Jesus, comes into this world **spiritually dead.** As Paul indicated in Romans 5:12-19, Adam was our representative therefore **we all share in his punishment.**

From Dr. Josh Moody:

One of the most difficult doctrines, people often say, that the Bible teaches is how, as in Adam, all sinned— as Paul talks about it in Romans — and therefore, sin leads to punishment and death, and we're in Adam.

Is this Adam's sin, and why am I being blamed for this?

How do we answer that question about the fairness of God in relation to our culpability in Adam's culpability...?

People often say that they object to that, but what they usually don't object to is the other side of Paul's argument, which is, as in Adam all sinned, so in Christ shall all be made alive. And if we object to the one, why wouldn't we object to the other?

What God is saying is that he treats humanity in two categories and two categories only. This is extraordinarily helpful for all kinds of racial conflict or class conflict.

From God's point of view there are only two categories: we're either in Adam or in Christ... This is one we should accept because it's taught in the Word, and for the practical reason that if we are to accept that we can be in Christ and made alive, we need to accept the other side of the coin that Paul teaches.

b. Moral Inability

The term "moral inability" refers to the fact that **unregenerate** human beings have: **no capacity to please God or merit his blessings.**

Most significantly, **they can't appeal to him for forgiveness, or work their way to salvation.**

Augustine, the bishop of Hippo who lived from A.D. 354 to 430, famously taught that before humanity's first sin, Adam and Eve lived in the state of ***posse non peccare***.

This Latin phrase can be translated literally as, "to be able not to sin." In its theological use, however, the phrase is more commonly translated as "the ability not to sin."

According to Augustine, Adam and Eve were empowered to avoid sin completely. But they also had the ability to sin. And when they sinned, they moved from the state of ***posse non peccare*** to the state of ***non posse non peccare*** — the ***inability not to sin***. They and all their naturally generated descendants **lost the moral ability to avoid sin**.

In places like John 8:31-44, and Romans 6:6-20, both Jesus and Paul compared moral inability to being **slaves to sin**. And Paul taught in Ephesians 2:1-5 that the unregenerate live under the control of sin, following the sinful ways of the world and its demonic leadership. And they remain in that state of spiritual death, incapable of rescuing themselves until God mercifully saves them. Yes, unregenerate people still do things that are *outwardly* good. They love and provide for their children. They promote justice. They even lay down their lives for others. But unfortunately, all of these acts are tainted because the unregenerate aren't motivated by love for God.

Jesus addressed this issue in Luke 6:43-45. He compared the works of the unregenerate to bad fruit produced by bad trees. His point was that human beings act according to their hearts. Therefore, those with evil hearts— namely, the unregenerate— are morally incapable of doing works that God considers to be good.

Paul described this problem in Romans 8:6-8 when he said:

The mind of sinful man is death... the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God (Romans 8:6-8).

From Dr. Carey Vinzant:

Are the unregenerate morally able to please God?

The short answer is "no," because the concept of pleasing God has to be framed in terms of relationship...

So, works that are pleasing to God are necessarily the product of a relationship between man and God.

In order to please God in how we live, we must first believe that he exists and that he is a rewarder of those who seek him— that's the language of Hebrews.

So, this is why the Anglican Articles of Religion say that the works of the unregenerate necessarily have the nature of sin, because they are works, they are things done by people outside the context of relationship with God, and since humanity is made for relationship with God, that is the necessary context for which any action that pleases him must happen.

So far, we've discussed the unregenerate in terms of spiritual death and moral inability. And that brings us to their third characteristic: **enmity with God**.

c. Enmity with God

One of the most harmful aspects of spiritual death is that the unregenerate are God's enemies. Scripture teaches that Satan and his followers are constantly at war with God and his faithful angels. And the unregenerate are on the side of Satan. They love their sin and hate God.

Listen to what Paul said of the unregenerate in Ephesians 2:1-3:

[They are] dead in [their] transgressions and sins... follow[ing] the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient... gratifying the cravings of [their] sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts... [They are] by nature objects of wrath (Ephesians 2:1-3).

It's hard to imagine a stronger statement of the enmity that exists between God and the unregenerate. The unregenerate aren't simply bystanders or innocent civilians in the spiritual conflict. Instead, as we read in places like Romans 5:10, and Colossians 1:21, the unregenerate are themselves God's enemies.

And because of this, they stand condemned, doomed to suffer God's everlasting wrath.

As Jesus told the unbelieving Jews in John 8:42-44:

If God were your Father, you would love me ... You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire (John 8:42-44).

And in James 4:4, James wrote:

Don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God (James 4:4).

None of this is to say that the unregenerate knowingly and purposefully oppose God, although some clearly do. Most of the unregenerate, however, are simply deceived.

After all, false religions, and even atheism, claim to promote true worldviews.

But even when the unregenerate lack a direct and explicit animosity toward the God of the Bible, they're still his enemies.

They're still part of the kingdom of this world, following the ways of Satan.

They still reject God's goodness and oppose his authority.

And God still condemns them.

4. **The Intermediate State:**

From Randy Alcorn:

The “intermediate state” is a term used by theologians to describe the time between people’s deaths and the resurrection.

–So, there is an intermediate state both for believers and unbelievers, and heaven in its present state, hell in its present state— what’s sometimes called the “present heaven” and the “present hell”— the eternal, eventual hell will be the lake of fire, the eternal, eventual heaven will be on the new earth.

–So, intermediate state is not like halfway between heaven and hell; it’s heaven or hell as they are now prior to the resurrection.

–So, everybody goes to the intermediate state when they die.

The intermediate state ends for everyone at the resurrection of the just and the resurrection of the unjust.

The intermediate state begins when we die and ends when Christ returns. It’s called “intermediate” because it lies between our present state of bodily life on the current earth, and our future state of bodily life in the new heavens and new earth.

It’s a somewhat unusual state because, unlike in the other states, in the intermediate state our souls are separated from our bodies.

Our discussion of the intermediate state will divide into three parts. First, we’ll address physical death. Second, we’ll consider the fate of unregenerate souls. And third, we’ll examine the destiny of regenerate souls. Let’s begin with the matter of physical death.

a. Physical Death

Physical death is a universal human experience, but it’s also horribly unnatural.

Why? Because our bodies weren’t created to die; they were designed to last forever.

That’s one of the reasons death is so tragic and so traumatic.

It shatters our existence.

It rips us out of the earthly creation we were designed to inhabit.

It ruptures our relationships, separating us from our families and loved ones.

And for those that are left behind, it hurts — badly. It’s no wonder that Scripture calls physical death our “enemy.”

Many scientists teach that physical death is the cessation of cellular activity. When the cells in our body stop working, we are dead. And this view is true, as far as it goes. But the theological aspects of physical death are far more significant. Like spiritual death, physical death is part of the curse God laid on humanity because of Adam’s sin in the Garden of Eden.

You'll recall that in Genesis 2:17, God told Adam:

You must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die (Genesis 2:17).

When Adam ate the forbidden fruit, he fell under God's curse. God graciously delayed Adam's physical death, so that Adam didn't die immediately. But he didn't lift the curse entirely, and Adam's body eventually died. And just as Adam's sin spread spiritual death to the entire human race, it also spread physical death to us. Paul talked extensively about this problem in Romans 5.

Listen to these examples from Romans 5:12-17:

Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men ... [T]he many died by the trespass of the one man ... [B]y the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man (Romans 5:12-17).

When we die, our souls are separated from our bodies, and our bodies are left to decay and return to dust. As we learn in Genesis 2:7, God created Adam from the dust of the ground. And when God cursed Adam in Genesis 3:19, he explicitly said that Adam had been created from the ground and would, therefore, return to the ground. He had been made from dust and would become dust again.

Now, Christians are sometimes tempted to think that because our bodies don't go with us to heaven when we die, they really aren't that important. But Scripture demonstrates that our bodies are still part of us, even after we die.

The most obvious examples of this are resurrections.

Consider the widow's son that Elijah raised from the dead in 1 Kings 17:20-22, or Jesus' friend Lazarus whom the Lord raised from the dead in John 11:43, 44. Before they were raised, their bodies were still referred to and treated as the people they were in life. There's no suggestion that their bodies were merely shells shed by their spirits. And everyone viewed their resurrections as blessings, because significant parts of these people— their bodies— had been returned to life.

From — Vincent Bacote, Ph.D.

So, what happens when we die, right?

If you believe there's an intermediate state that we are present with God outside of our bodies when we die, it might be easy to think that our bodies are no longer a part of us, because aren't we somewhere with God and then our body, which is no longer part of us, that's in the grave? But the reason that we would be mistaken to think about that is, one, God created us as whole persons.

So, this separation is actually a tragic result that happens with the Fall, as John Cooper puts it. And the fact is, though, is that that separation that happens... While the good thing is apart from, after death, people are still experiencing God's presence, but, you know, we're made to be embodied, and because we're made to be embodied, and because Christ is raised in a body, then what that says to us is, well, even though there is this tragic separation, that's still our body in the grave, that's still part of us, and in the last day, I mean, that body is going to be raised.

When our bodies die, **we aren't whole anymore.**

For those who are saved, that means **we can't do the things God created us to do,** like filling and subduing the earth. Yes, heaven will be wonderful for our souls. But physical death is still a tremendous loss that should push us to hope for restoration in the future.

And for the unsaved, it's an **unmitigated catastrophe.**

It takes them from bad to worse, and **gives them a foretaste of even greater suffering in the future.**

Now that we've described physical death as the start of the intermediate state, we're ready to consider the experiences of unregenerate souls.

b. Unregenerate Souls

As we saw in our discussion of spiritual death, **when our souls die they don't cease to exist. They don't even cease to be conscious.** And the same thing is true when our souls are separated from our bodies by physical death. Our souls continue to exist, think, and feel even after our bodies die.

We read in Ecclesiastes 12:7:

The dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it (Ecclesiastes 12:7).

For the unregenerate, the fact that their **souls continue to exist should cause great fear,** because when their spirit returns to God who gave it, **it's not to enjoy his blessings.**

It's to **begin suffering their just punishment** in hell.

As Jesus taught in Luke 12:4-5:

Do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more... Fear him who, after the killing of the body, has power to throw you into hell (Luke 12:4-5).

From Rev. José Aristides, (translation)

I believe that people should believe in hell for two reasons.

The first reason is that Jesus Christ spoke many times about hell.

For example ... [he said] that people should not fear the one who can kill the body and nothing else. But we should fear the one who can kill the body and also throw the soul into hell.

In addition, the church needs to believe, trust in this, and preach about hell— speaking firmly, but in love — so that men can understand their condition before God so they won't be eternally condemned.

Scripture uses many different words that theologians and translators include in the generic term “hell.” For example, the Hebrew word **Sheol**, or “SHEE-oh!” in English, is used in a variety of ways throughout the Old Testament, including, in Psalm 9:17, as a reference to the home of unregenerate souls. The Old Testament also uses **Abaddon**, or “uh-BAD-n” in English, which means “destruction,” in places like Job 26:6 and Proverbs 15:11. And bowr, or “pit” in English, refers to a place of punishment in Isaiah 14:15-19.

The New Testament also has a variety of terms for the place souls are held during the intermediate state. For instance, the Greek word **Hades**, or “Hey-deez” in English, is used in several ways, including as a place of punishment in Luke 10:15. Abussos or **abyss**, generally refers to a prison for demons, as in Luke 8:31 and Revelation 9:1-11. But in Romans 10:7, Paul also used it to refer to a place for human souls, including Jesus’ righteous soul.

The word “geenna” or **Gehenna**, however, universally identifies a place of fiery punishment, torment and destruction. It’s mentioned in many passages, including Matthew 5:22, and Mark 9:43. Gehenna is often described as bodily suffering, which associates it with the final state, rather than with the intermediate state. But James 3:6 indicates that Gehenna is already in use, suggesting that it’s where unregenerate souls go during the intermediate state.

The clearest picture we get of how unregenerate souls experience the intermediate state comes from Luke 16:19-31. In this passage, Jesus described a rich man who died and was immediately tormented in Hades.

Listen to Luke 16:23-25 and this description of **Hades**:

In hell, where [the rich man] was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. So he called to him, “Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.”

But Abraham replied, “Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony” (Luke 16:23-25).

The Bible doesn’t make it clear whether Jesus’ account of Hades is an historical account or a parable. But the distinction isn’t terribly relevant to our investigation of the intermediate state. After all, the warning this account offers would be meaningless if the torments it describes weren’t real.

From Dr. Vern S. Poythress:

People ask the question, what happens to people who do not believe in Christ when they die? And the answer is given in several places in the New Testament, but one of the most detailed is in Luke 16, where Jesus gives a parable, but it’s a parable that realistically depicts what the afterlife is like for both believers and unbelievers.

The unbeliever, who’s the rich man, he goes and is in torment. That’s right after he’s died. He’s already being punished because he has rebelled against God and he is — of course, apart from Christ— his sins are unpaid for. And so, he is depicted as being in **suffering**, but that is... a state that’s **prior to the final judgment when Christ returns.**

~~Having explored the intermediate state with regard to physical death and unregenerate souls, let's turn our attention to regenerate souls.~~

5. **Final State:**

In a prior lesson, we divided the **eschaton**, or last days, into three stages:

The inauguration spanned Jesus' life and earthly ministry, including the foundational work done by the first century apostles and prophets. During the inauguration, the age to come, characterized by God's blessings for his faithful people, began to overlap with this age, characterized by sin, suffering and death.

The second stage is the continuation, which began immediately after the inauguration. This is the period we live in now, so it's also the period covered by the present state and intermediate state of individual eschatology. During this stage, we feel the tension of coexisting in this age and the age to come.

And the third stage is the consummation, which will completely end this age, and permanently replace it with the age to come. With regard to individual eschatology, the consummation is the stage when all human beings simultaneously reach their final state.

We'll divide our discussion of the final state into three parts.

First, we'll address the physical resurrection of the dead.

Second, we'll describe the fate of the unregenerate.

And third, we'll explore the fate of the regenerate.

Let's look first at the physical resurrection of the dead.

a. **Physical Resurrection** (Unregenerate)

When God created humanity, he gave us bodies and souls. During the intermediate state, our bodies are temporarily separated from our souls. But when the final state begins, the bodies of everyone that has ever died will be resurrected, so that we can all face God's final judgment as whole persons.

This event is often called the "**general resurrection**" because it includes everyone that has ever died, whether regenerate or unregenerate.

The general resurrection is taught clearly in both the Old and New Testaments. And Hebrews 6:1, 2 asserts that it's one of the most basic doctrines that every Christian should affirm.

From Dr. Voddie Baucham, Jr.:

The general resurrection of the dead is important because, as Paul says in Acts 17, God has fixed a day on which he will judge the world, and he's given us evidence of this by raising Christ from the dead. That judgment is of whole people, and the general resurrection is about affirming the fact that we are whole people, that we will stand before God as whole people.

And what this does is not only affirm the fact that we are going to be judged in the bodies in which we lived, sinned, believed, but also that we are going to spend eternity as whole people. This is important not only from the standpoint of the way we view eschatology, but it's also important from the standpoint of the way we view one another and the inherent dignity and value of every human being, because we're made in the image of God.

In the Old Testament, the prophets taught that the physical bodies that had once died and returned to dust would rise again from the dust. And they would rise in order to face divine judgment.

Daniel 12:2 says:

Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt (Daniel 12:2).

And Isaiah 26:19-21 prophesies:

Your dead will live; their bodies will rise. You who dwell in the dust, wake up and shout for joy... [T]he earth will give birth to her dead... See, the Lord is coming out of his dwelling to punish the people of the earth for their sins (Isaiah 26:19-21).

Other Old Testament passages like Psalm 49:7-15, Psalm 73:24-28, and Job 19:25-27 also indicate a resurrection unto judgment.

In the New Testament, Jesus confirmed the general resurrection multiple times. For example, in Matthew 22:31, 32 and Luke 20:35-38, he called God, "the God of Abraham... Isaac and... Jacob," saying that God was "not the God of the dead but of the living."

And listen to what Jesus said in John 5:28-29:

A time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear [the Son of Man's] voice and come out— those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned (John 5:28-29).

Like the Old Testament, Jesus said that all the dead will rise at the general resurrection in order to face God's judgment. And other reliable New Testament characters believed the same thing, including Martha in John 11:24, and the apostles in Acts 4:2. The apostle Paul also argued for the general resurrection in Acts 17:32, 23:6, and 24:21, as well as in his own writings in 1 Corinthians 15:12-42.

The New Testament teaches that the general resurrection will take place at the judgment throne of God, or at least that's where all humanity will be brought after having been raised.

Listen to the Apostle John's vision in Revelation 20:11-13:

Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it... The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done (Revelation 20:11-13).

The last detail of the general resurrection we should mention is what happens to those that are still alive when judgment day arrives. Like those that have been resurrected, those that are still alive will also be judged. First Corinthians 15:51, 52 mentions this fact with specific reference to the regenerate. But it applies equally to all people everywhere.

As Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:9-10:

We make it our goal to please [the Lord], whether we are at home in the body or away from it. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad (2 Corinthians 5:9-10).

At the consummation, the dead will rise, and join those who remain alive, before the judgment throne of God. And he will judge all of us according to our works. Those who have been unfaithful to him will be condemned for their sins and receive eternal punishment.

But those who have been faithful— those who have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit and justified in Christ— will receive an everlasting reward.

Now that we've seen that the final state begins with the physical resurrection of the dead, let's address the fate of the unregenerate.

b. Unregenerate

As we've seen, all fallen human beings deserve punishment because of Adam's sin. But beyond this, we're guilty of our own sins as well. As a result, God would be justified in condemning all of us. But because of his great mercy, he saves some. Sadly, but justly, those that aren't saved suffer the appropriate punishment for their sins.

As Jesus himself said in Matthew 16:27:

For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done (Matthew 16:27, ESV).

The word translated "repay" here comes from the Greek word, "apodidómi" (ἀποδίδωμι). Some translations render this word "reward." But Jesus was clear that the "reward" here refers to both **punishments** and **blessings** "according to what [each person] has done." This same idea is clear throughout Scripture, including in Mark 9:43-47, John 5:29, 2 Corinthians 5:10, and 2 Peter 2:4-9.

Earlier, we mentioned several different terms that Scripture uses for hell. The New Testament descriptions of hell typically fall into one of **two categories**, referring to hell as a place of darkness, or as a place of fire.

With regard to its darkness, Scripture calls hell “to skotos to exōteron” meaning “**the outer darkness**” or simply “**the darkness**.” We see this in places like Matthew 8:12, 22:13 and 25:30. It’s also referred to as “ho zophos tou skotous,” meaning “**blackest darkness**” in Jude 13.

This darkness is significant because it implies that God doesn’t manifest his glorious, gracious presence in hell. Revelation 21:23, 24 teaches that in the New Jerusalem, the light of God’s glory will fill the entire city.

But the wicked in hell will be shut out from this light. They will be eternally separated from the glories of God’s kindness, favor, and mercy.

As Paul wrote in 2 Thessalonians 1:9:

They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power (2 Thessalonians 1:9).

That’s not to say that God isn’t present in hell. After all, he’s omnipresent, meaning he is present everywhere all the time. But in hell, he’s present as the jailor and punisher, not as a gracious, glorious Savior.

From Dr. Richard Phillips:

You hear a lot of people say that God is not present in hell because the apostle Paul in 2 Thessalonians 1 describes how it is being away from the presence of the Lord. And yet, of course God is present in hell because God is present in all places. He’s present there in his wrath.

People have this idea if they go to hell, oh, what a good time they’re going to have, and it will just be like at the neighborhood bar, and they’ll be doing what they want. In fact, it will be the active wrath of God. He will be absent in his grace, in his favor.

You think of the great Aaronic blessing: “The Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make his face to shine upon you.” There will be none of that in hell. It will be the turned-away face of God; they will be conscious of the curse of God, the alienation that they have from God, the wrath of God.

Think of our Lord Jesus on the cross. There’s a good place for us to go to look at this. “Why have you forsaken me?” God was upon his Son in his wrath on the cross. And so, when people say that God is not present in hell, some of those connotations are necessary. God’s favor, God’s goodness, God’s love, all of these things are completely absent. That’s what Paul’s talking about... **But the wrath of God, the terror of God the awareness of the beauty and the holiness of the God they have spurned, but to which they have no access eternally, these things will be very present in hell.**

It will be the curse and the wrath of God forever and ever.

In addition to describing hell as a place of darkness, Scripture says that hell is a place of fire. It's called: "eternal fire" in Jude 7; the "lake of fire" in Revelation 20:14, 15; and a "fiery furnace" in Matthew 13:50. And as we saw earlier, it's also referred to as geenna or Gehenna— a place of fiery punishment, torment and destruction. The name Gehenna identifies the Valley of Hinnom, where apostate Israelites burned their children in sacrifice to false gods. Second Chronicles 28:3 tells us that King Ahaz sacrificed his children there. And 2 Chronicles 33:6 reports that King Manasseh did, too. Clearly this earthly valley is just a metaphor for the real hell. Even so, it points to the kind of torment the wicked suffer there.

But perhaps the most frightening thing we can say about hell is that it will never end. As Paul wrote in 2 Thessalonians 1:9, the wicked "will be punished with everlasting destruction." Jesus made the same point in Matthew 25:41, where he referred to hell as "eternal fire," and in Matthew 25:46, where he talked about "eternal punishment." In the same way, Hebrews 6:2 calls hell "eternal judgment."

The idea of eternal torment in a lake of fire should terrify anyone. It should motivate us to run to God begging for mercy in Christ. And when we think of our unsaved family and friends spending eternity in such torment, it can cause us to wonder how a loving God could inflict such severe punishment on people he created.

Do their sins really warrant such a terrible fate?

From Dr. Matt Carter:

One of the most difficult questions that we'll ever have to answer as a pastor is, how could a loving God send anyone, even his enemies, to eternal damnation or to hell? And I think the answer lies within an understanding of God's holiness.

I don't think that most people understand just how holy God is, and in turn just how sinful we are. We have a very limited view of God's holiness, and so we don't understand that when we've offended or sinned against an infinitely holy God, then we deserve an infinite punishment.

When you really play that out it actually makes a lot of sense, but I think the fact that God is so incredibly holy and that in turn, we're so incredibly sinful that his wrath justifiably could be poured out on mankind because of that holiness...

If the gap between his holiness and our sinfulness were not that great, if the chasm were not that wide, then God could have just said, "Hey, I forgive you of your sins. Go on about your business," and nobody would go to hell. But, there's the cross of Jesus. He poured out his wrath on Jesus at the cross. That seems pretty severe if there's no hell and if there's no gap between God's holiness and our unrighteousness. And so, the good news is, though, that anyone can avoid the wrath of God because of the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.

And so, I think the question is not, why would a loving God send people to hell, but how in the world could a loving God allow any of us to go to heaven? And he did it through Jesus. And the only way we'll ever get to the bottom of that is when we understand just how holy he is and just how sinful we are.

As harsh as it may sound, the wicked deserve their punishment in hell. And although we may weep for their suffering because we love them, we can never count it to be unjust or undeserved. ~~Having looked at the final state with regard to physical resurrection and the punishment of the unregenerate, let's focus on the final blessings the regenerate receive.~~

c. When? (Unregenerate mankind from four perspectives...)

Let's take a moment to look how/when each of the four views of the End Times sees the unregenerate resurrection and judgment.

i. Historic Premillennialism

- Resurrection at the end of the Millennium.
- Judgment at the Great White Throne.

ii. Dispensational Premillennialism

- Resurrection at end of the Millennium.
- Judgment at the Great White Throne.

iii. Postmillennialism (the "Golden Age or Kingdom is NOW)

- Resurrection at the end of the millennial kingdom, after the battle of Armageddon, after Christ returns, after successful period of evangelism.
- Judgment at the Great White Throne.

iv. Amillennialism

- Resurrection at the end of the millennial kingdom, after the battle of Armageddon, after Christ returns.
- Judgment at the Great white Throne.

6. Conclusion

Please keep in mind that in this lesson we focused **ONLY** on the **unregenerate!**

In this lesson, we've explored the various states of "**The Living and the Dead**" in **individual eschatology**. We've considered the **present state of the unregenerate**. We've described **the intermediate state** in terms of the universality of physical death, and the subsequent experiences of the unregenerate. And we've looked at the **final state of humanity** beginning with physical resurrection, and continuing with the ultimate destinies of the unregenerate.

Studying individual eschatology is important because it reminds us that our lives in this fallen world have everlasting consequences. For those of us that receive salvation, we're guaranteed to be blessed beyond measure in the intermediate state, and even beyond that in the final state. But those that reject Christ have no hope in the next world.

Far from causing us to gloat over our good fortune, **those facts should inspire us to preach the gospel, so that as many as possible might share our everlasting joy and fellowship in the new heavens and the new earth.**