

Are There People in Hell Today?

Many Christians and even pastors don't believe anyone is in hell right now. They believe the people who have died without faith in Jesus Christ are in a soul sleep until the great white throne Judgment Day, and then they will be cast into the lake of fire.

Only the second part of that statement is true. People will be cast into the lake of fire at the judgment because there are two hells. The current one is Hades, described as "down in the earth." The future hell is Gehenna, also called the "lake of fire." This hell will be cast into outer darkness. Many Bible verses indicate that a person goes "down" into the earth, proving there is a current place of torment, separate from the future hell.

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Luke 16 tells the story of the rich man and Lazarus. Lazarus died, and angels carried him to Abraham's bosom. It says, "the rich man also died and was buried. And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments," (Luke 16:22b-23a, KJV) immediately after he died. The next thing Jesus said was "and in hell." The rich man went immediately to hell, not to sleep. The word for "hell" in this verse is the word "Hades," which again references the current hell and not the future lake of fire. He didn't appear before the great white throne judgment because that will not take place until the end. The Bible makes it clear: All people who die without repenting, and receiving Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, will go immediately to the current hell (Hades). From the following verses we can read that the Bible is abundantly clear on this issue:

"Hell from beneath is excited about you, to meet you at your coming; It stirs up the dead for you, All the chief ones of the earth; It has raised up from their thrones, all the kings of the nations. They all shall speak and say to you: Have you also become as weak as we? Have you become like us?" (Isa. 14:9-10, NKJV). A person must be awake to speak!

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The strong among the mighty shall speak to him out of the midst of hell ... They have gone down ... Assyria is there, and all her company, With their graves all around her, All of them slain, fallen by the sword. Her graves are set in the recesses of the Pit ... There is Elam ... gone down uncircumcised to the lower parts of the earth ... Now they bear their shame with those who go down to the Pit (Ezek. 32:21-24).

Hell is described as "down." These men must be awake to bear shame.

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