

Are People in Hell Right Now?

A lot of Christians and even pastors don't believe anyone is in hell right now. They believe the people who have died rejecting 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 located "down in the earth." The future hell is Gehenna, and this one is 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.

Luke 16 tells the story of the rich man and Lazarus. Lazarus died and was carried by angels 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 and didn't go 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 is clear that 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!

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).

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

"I cast it down to hell together with those who descend into the Pit ... in the depths of the earth" (Ezek. 31:16b-c).

"But those *who* seek my life, to destroy *it*, Shall go into the lower parts of the earth" (Ps. 63:9).

At the great white throne judgment the people in the current hell are cast into the lake of fire, and into outer darkness. This does not say they go back down into the earth, but implies a different location. The many verses that state they shall "go down" to the lower parts of the earth obviously refer to a place other than the lake of fire at Judgment Day.

"Let death seize them; Let them go down alive into hell" (Ps. 55:15a).

"I am counted with those who go down to the pit; I am like a man *who has* no strength" (Ps. 88:4).

"Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works" (Rev. 20:13b). Hades delivers up the dead who were there. They were

in a place of torment, as Luke 16 states, and not sleeping.

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“Delivered him to the tormentors” (Matt. 18:34b, KJV). To be tormented, a person would be awake to be aware.

“The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever” (Rev. 20:10, NKJV). This is prior to the great white throne judgment. These two men were cast into the future hell before anyone else.

“Yes, his soul draws near the Pit, and his life to the executioners” (Job 33:22).

People are dying every day who don't know Jesus, and they are headed for hell. Jesus said in Matthew 7:13-14 that many are going to hell and few are going to heaven. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5:11a, “Knowing, therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.”

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