



Brown Community Group Discussion Guide

“Death, Glorification, Unification: What happens to our Body, Soul and Spirit?”

Lesson 7 – What Happens to Unbelievers at Death?

March 26, 2017

I. Lesson Starters:

Last week we studied what happens to believers after they die. One thing is certain, when a believer dies, they immediately go to be with the Lord, in Paradise, definitely a good place. To our earthly, human eyes, their body may appear to be sleeping and since we cannot see their spirits, often the metaphor of “sleep” or “resting” has been used to describe this state. However, the Bible has enough references of what death looks like from “the other side” of death, or from God’s eternal, spiritual point of view, to know that there is an existence, a life after death for the believer. How is this different, or is this any different for non-believers?

II. Unbelievers

Jesus speaking: John 8: 23-24

23But he continued, “You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. **24**I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am he, you will indeed die in your sins.”

Where are these Pharisees now?(in the passage)

Where will they be when they die? (same state of guilt, different location, “in their sins”)

III. Both states of existence are eternal:

We know that when we are saved, our eternal life begins, it extends forever into future eternity.

John 5:24 "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.

If a non-believer never believes in, trusts in, accepts Christ’s offer of love, forgiveness and salvation. If they harden their heart, refuse God’s love, they will remain in and die “in their sins” and experience eternal death, extending forever into future eternity. Not fun.

What does it make you think of, for a sinner to be “in their sins”.

Think back to our studies of the character of God. Can sin enter the presence of God?

Hard to imagine, but why would any person choose to NOT be in the presence of God?

(A good read- (CS Lewis **The Great Divorce**) it’s not about divorce, but about the separation between heaven and hell and why some people would choose hell over heaven, and the indescribable elation and fullness of those entering heaven. Fictional, i.e. not a theology, but a fun, interesting story.)

IV. Things change at death-

Our spiritual state of submission or rebellion becomes permanent. Saint or sinner at death, same after death.

No mention in Scripture of any second chances or changes in our heart after death. (Plenty of references of chances to repent or change before death. The Bible is full of them. It is one of the permeating themes of the Bible. (In fact, try to find a single page in the Bible, that doesn’t have this option available in life on earth.)

So, after death, our state is fixed, decided, and can’t be changed. Our eternal life or destination has been decided.

But what about the rich man and Lazarus story-- didn’t the rich man change and have pity on his brothers after death?

Matthew 16:19“Now there was a rich man, and he habitually dressed in purple and fine linen, joyously living in splendor every day. **20**“And a poor man named Lazarus was laid at his gate, covered with sores,**21**and longing to be fed with the crumbs which were falling from the rich man’s table; besides, even the dogs were coming and licking his sores. **22**“Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham’s bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried. **23**“In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom. **24**“And he cried out and said, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in

this flame.' [25](#)"But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony. [26](#)'And besides all this, 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.' [27](#)"And he said, 'Then I beg you, father, that you send him to my father's house — [28](#)for I have five brothers—in order that he may warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.' [29](#)"But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.' [30](#)"But he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!' [31](#)"But he said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.'"

What was the central theme of this story Jesus told? Why was he telling it and to whom was he telling it?

Mt. 16- [14](#)Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, were listening to all these things and were scoffing at Him. [15](#)And He said to them, "**You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men**, but God knows your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God.

Jesus was telling this story to a group of men who always tried to justify themselves in the sight of men. They always wanted to look good. Just as the rich man, was trying to make himself look good and blame God for his state in torment. For if God has sent someone from the dead to warn him, surely he would have listened and would NOT be here in torment! It is God's fault, not the rich man's fault! Or so he tried to claim.

The rich man was still the same, he hadn't changed and become this great evangelist caring for his family.

We enjoy this story as it describes the afterlife state, but often miss why and to whom Jesus was telling it. And it even has a great punchline at the very end, where Jesus says, "**they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead**". (Jesus, the one who would rise from the dead, was speaking!!)

Side note: I've often wondered, if I lived in the Old Testament time, would I have followed God as revealed in the Bible, OT? But Jesus definitely states that if one would believe in Jesus they would believe in God through the OT, and vice versa, helping us also understand how faith in the OT is equivalent to faith in the New Testament. Also, Jesus in Mt. 16:15 (above) also said that God knows their hearts. He knows our hearts, that is so comforting!

V. Things change at the Final Judgement

Rev. 20

[11](#)Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. [12](#)And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. [13](#)And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. [14](#)Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. [15](#)And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

In Parables

Matthew 25:

[30](#) And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

[41](#)"Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

[46](#)"Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

2 Thessalonians 1:8

those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. ⁹ They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from^[b] the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might,

Questions to consider:

- 1- Although the Bible teaches that there is no second chance after death, why do you think some would like to think there is a second chance after death?
- 2- What should our message be to unbelievers, those "dead in their sin", yet still alive on earth?
- 3- Do you think it is common for humans to "try to justify themselves" before others and themselves? Do you feel the urge to do this and have you seen this in others? How does this relate to repentance and salvation?