

Death of Man: Intermediate State

Because the Bible does not say much about what happens to one's soul upon death, there is considerable confusion and debate on the question of an intermediate state. The intermediate state is defined as the time between a person's physical death and resurrection. Is there a place that a person's soul goes to for a period of time before going on to heaven or hell?

1. Where is Sheol?

- a. Nowhere. It is simply the grave.
- b. Heaven.
- c. Hell.
- d. A place for the souls of Old Testament believers until Christ returns.

2. Purgatory is necessary because:

- a. A Christian must make amends for his venial sins.
- b. Penance has been inadequate.
- c. It is the final stage of sanctification.
- d. It is not necessary because it is a concept without any biblical basis.

3. Upon death, does the soul merely go to sleep?

- a. Yes.
- b. No.

Death of Man: Intermediate State Teacher Notes

Teacher note: Quizzes cover a lot of material. Take the time to help the student learn the biblical answer to each question and have fun along the way (i.e. you can be a game show host!). Use the online version of the quiz as well!

To learn more about these questions, consider these references:

1. What and Where is Sheol?
(www.Helpmewithbiblestudy.org/7Humans/DeathWhatWhereIsSheol.aspx)
2. The Intermediate State: Purgatory... Does it exist?
(www.Helpmewithbiblestudy.org/7Humans/DeathPurgatory.aspx)
3. The Intermediate State: Soul Sleep... Does it exist?
(www.Helpmewithbiblestudy.org/7Humans/DeathSoulSleep.aspx)

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1. Where is Sheol?

a. Nowhere. It is simply the grave.

Correct! The answer is "a"!

Because the etymology of the Hebrew term "Sheol" is uncertain, there has been difficulty in translating it into other languages, which can be seen by comparing various Bible translations. The Revised Standard Version (RSV) and the New American Standard (NAS) do not translate the term "Sheol." The King James Version (KJV) translates "Sheol" as "hell" inconsistently about half the time and the New International Version (NIV) translates the term as the place of burial "the grave."

The Hebrew term "Sheol" appears to be a place where dead people, both Believers and non-Believers, went to; it is a metaphorical way (like a poetic device) of describing what happens to people when they died. It was not a term to describe the shadowy region of the netherworld or a temporary place the dead go to before judgment.

The term "Sheol" appears to be best translated as "the grave." If the translation "Hades" or "Hell" is used, the passages that reference "Sheol" do not make theological sense. For example, it does not make sense that the souls of Believers are "raised up" from hell; however, it does make sense that their souls are 'raised up' from the grave."

b. Heaven.

Sorry, that is incorrect. It is clearly not heaven.

c. Hell.

Sorry, that is incorrect. Many references to "Sheol" would not make sense if it meant "Hell".

"The LORD kills and makes alive; He brings down to Sheol and raises up." (1 Sam 2:6)

"For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; Nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay." (Ps 16:10)

"O LORD, You have brought up my soul from Sheol; You have kept me alive, that I would not go down to the pit." (Ps 30:3)

"For Your lovingkindness toward me is great, And You have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol." (Ps 86:13)

and he said, "I called out of my distress to the LORD, And He answered me I cried for help from the depth of Sheol; You heard my voice." (Jon 2:2)

d. A place for the souls of Old Testament believers until Christ returns.

Sorry, that is incorrect. It seems to be a place for everyone regardless of one's faith or lack of.

2. Purgatory is necessary because:

a. A Christian must make amends for his venial sins.

Sorry, that is incorrect. According to Roman Catholic tradition, Purgatory is the place where the souls of Believers go to be further purified from sin.

There is no such reference of this intermediate state in the Bible.

b. Penance has been inadequate.

Sorry, that is incorrect. Penance, also known as "satisfaction", is the required punishment determined by the ordained priest at the time of absolution.

The whole process of repentance and receiving penance is commonly known as "confession," and the priest, who has the power to forgive sins, absolves or remits the eternal guilt and penalty of that particular sin by determining the temporal punishment (satisfaction).

The purpose of satisfaction is to take away something from the repented Roman Catholic sinner for the honor of God. Penance typically come in three forms: 1) financial (depriving oneself of the goods of fortune), 2) fasting (depriving oneself of the goods of the body) or 3) prayer (depriving oneself of the goods of the soul).

There is no such reference for this practice in the Bible.

c. It is the final stage of sanctification.

Sorry, that is incorrect. Roman Catholics believe that purgatory is the final stage of sanctification, involving suffering and involving a real fire of lasting punishment perhaps for thousands of years. It is seen as Christ applying the purifying redemption that He accomplished on the cross.

It is important to note that there is no biblical basis for any part of this concept.

d. It is not necessary because it is a concept without any biblical basis.

Correct! The answer is "d"!

The Bible is unequivocal and clear; there is no such intermediate state as purgatory. The doctrine of purgatory is an example of where Roman Catholic tradition is held in higher esteem than the Bible.

3. Upon death, does the soul merely go to sleep?

a. Yes.

Sorry, that is incorrect. In over thirty instances where Old Testament Kings were described as "slept with his fathers," the expression was a euphemism for death. There was no mention or evidence that this phrase was in reference to one's soul.

b. No.

Correct! The answer is "b"!

Close examination of all relevant biblical passages do not support the concept of an intermediate state such as soul sleep.