

# What Really Happens to Those Who Die Without Hearing the Gospel?

written by Alfred Persson | November 11, 2025



Google “Will there be a second chance for salvation after death?” and dozens of respected sites will appear emphatically proclaiming “No”.

*What about those who do not believe? Wouldn't they repent and believe if they were given a second chance? The answer is no, they would not because their hearts are not changed simply because they die. Their hearts and minds “are at enmity” against God and won't accept Him even when they see Him face to face. This is evidenced clearly in the story of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31. If ever someone should have repented when given a second chance to see clearly the truth, it was the rich man. But although he was in torment in hell, he only asked that Abraham send Lazarus back to earth to warn his brothers so they didn't have to suffer the same fate. There was no repentance in his heart, only regret for where he found himself. Abraham's answer says it*

*all: "And he said to him, If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded, even though one rose from the dead" (Luke 16:31). Here we see that the witness of the Scriptures is sufficient for salvation for those who believe it, and no other revelation will bring about salvation to those who do not. No second, third, or fourth chances would be enough to turn the heart of stone into a heart of flesh. -Got Questions*

*<https://www.gotquestions.org/second-chance-salvation.html>*

GotQuestions is clearly wrong, this prophetic parable spoken against the Scribes and Pharisees who refused to hear Moses and the prophets that Jesus is the Christ, and would continue to do so even after they received the ultimate sign from God of the risen Lazarus, contains more than enough indications the Rich Man was experiencing his "second chance" in Luke 16:19-31.

The Rich man is not said to be irredeemably wicked. Nor does he act like a Reprobate. When his cries for aid are refused he doesn't begin cursing both Abraham and Lazarus.

Throughout this context he reverently refers to "Father Abraham", pleading "have mercy" (1653 ἐλεέω eleeo) not a whit differently than did blind Bartimaeus who called out to Jesus for the same thing: "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" (Mk. 10:47 NKJ). The aorist tense indicates both had specific acts of mercy they wanted, relief from thirst or blindness. Nothing in their cries for pity implies unrepentant hearts or hostility against God's justice and truth. "Repentance" is on the Rich Man's mind, he proves that when he begs Lazarus warn his brothers so "they will repent" (Lk. 16:30).

Gotquestions claims the torments of hades are unpersuasive, but Abraham doesn't say that. He says the living who refuse to "hear Moses and the Prophets" won't be persuaded by someone rising from the dead.

This context is more than a parable. Its clearly a prophetic warning to the Scribes and Pharisees who mocked Christ refusing to hear Moses and the Prophets like everyone else (Lk. 16:13-16), never believing any of the incredible signs Jesus did right before their eyes. Even the sign of Lazarus risen from the dead failed to convince them, instead they "plotted to put Lazarus to death also" (John 12:10). In this prophetic parable Christ contradicts their tradition Abraham will prevent their descent into hell:

*"In the Hereafter Abraham will sit at the entrance of Gehinnom and will not allow any circumcised Israelite to descend into it."- Genesis Rabbah XLVIII. 8*

Therefore, the claim this parable proves there is no second chance is false. Moreover, it "twists scripture" because Hades will be emptied out and destroyed on Judgment Day (Rev. 20:11-15), destroying the "impassible

barrier” separating the Rich Man from Abraham (Lk. 16:26).

This parable has many indications the Rich Man was getting his “second chance”.

1.) We would expect an irredeemably wicked man would curse both Abraham and Lazarus for refusing to help him. Instead, he shows great reverence for “Father Abraham” and selfless concern for his family (Luke 16:27).

2.) Abraham affectionately calls the Rich Man “son” (Luke 16:25). That would be impossible if the Rich Man were an irredeemable enemy of God: “Do I not hate them, O LORD, who hate you? And do I not loathe those who rise up against you?” (Psalm 139:21).

3.) Abraham and others with him wanted to comfort the Rich Man, but an “great gulf” prevented them (Luke 16:26). It is impossible they would rebelliously desire to subvert God’s just punishment, therefore that is not what the Rich Man is experiencing.

4.) Although translators have the Rich Man crying “I am tormented (3600 ὀδυνάω odunao) in this flame”, the reverse of the “comfort” (3870 παρακαλέω parakaleo) Lazarus was experiencing, ὀδυνάω can denote “anxiety (Lk. 2:48) and “sorrow” (Ac. 20:38). These could be part of the Rich Man’s torment.

5.) Christ did not use the common word for “fire” (4442 πῦρ pur) that appears when speaking of God’s judgment (Lk. 3:9, 17; 17:29). He chose “flame” (5395 φλόξ phlox)” which is the “visible aspect of a fire that springs upward and is usually orange”(Logos Bible Sense Lexicon). It is this “flame” that often accompanies revelation of God (LXX: Ex. 3:2; Judges 13:20; Isa. 66:15; Acts 7:30; 2 Th. 1:8). When Christ is revealed His eyes are “like a flame of fire” (Rev. 1:14; 2 Th. 1:7-8).

6.) In Hades was “where he was being tormented(931 βάσανος basanos)...this place of torment” (Lk. 16:23, 28 NRS). The word denotes “a touchstone, which is a black siliceous stone used to test the purity of gold or silver by the colour of the streak produced on it by rubbing it with either metal 2) the rack or instrument of torture by which one is forced to divulge the truth.-Strong’s Concordance. The symbolism suggests a refining process (Zech. 13:9; Ps. 51:7; 66:10; Isa. 1:25; 6:7; 48:10; Ezek. 24:13; Dan. 11:35), a purging of sin that reveals the truth of the individual, the “gold” within:

*But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner’s fire And like launderer’s soap. He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi, And purge them as gold and silver, That they may offer to the LORD An offering in righteousness. (Mal. 3:2-3 NKJ)*

7.) The symbolism of water, extreme thirst (Lk. 16:24) may allude to this text:

*As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit (0953 בֹּרַחַב bowr) wherein is no water. (Zec. 9:11 KJV)*

The idea of redemption from Hades is not foreign to the Old Testament:

*And said, I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the LORD, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice.  
(Jon. 2:2 KJV)*

*I called on Your name, O LORD, From the lowest pit (0953 בֹּרַחַת bowr).  
(Lam. 3:55 NKJ)*

*1 I waited patiently for the LORD; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry.*

*2 He brought me up also out of an horrible pit (0953 בֹּרַחַת bowr), out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings.*

*3 And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD.(Ps. 40:1-3 KJV)*

**Scriptures explicitly or implicitly refer to redemption from Sheol Hades.**

‘See now that I, I am He, And there is no god besides Me; **It is I who put to death and give life. I have wounded and it is I who heal**, And there is no one who can deliver from My hand. (Deut. 32:39 NAU)

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

**10 For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol;** Nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.

**11 You will make known to me the path of life;** In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever. (Ps. 16:10-11 NAU) [Although applied to Christ, verse 11 shows it also applies to David.]

**0 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 NAU)

But **God will redeem my soul from the power of Sheol**, For He will receive me. Selah. (Ps. 49:15 NAU)

**1** For the choir director. A Psalm of David. I waited patiently for the LORD; And He inclined to me and heard my cry.

**2 He brought me up out of the pit of destruction**, out of the miry clay, And He set my feet upon a rock making my footsteps firm.

**3** He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God; Many will see and fear And will trust in the LORD. (Ps. 40:1-3 NAU)

**19** For Your righteousness, O God, reaches to the heavens, You who have done great things; O God, who is like You?

**20 You who have shown me many troubles and distresses Will revive me again, And will bring me up again from the depths of the earth.** (Ps. 71:19-20 NAU)

For Your lovingkindness toward me is great, And **You have delivered my**



soul from the depths of Sheol. (Ps. 86:13 NAU)

**Shall I ransom them from the power of Sheol? Shall I redeem them from death?** O Death, where are your thorns? O Sheol, where is your sting? Compassion will be hidden from My sight. (Hos. 13:14 NAU)

As for you also, **because of the blood of My covenant with you, I have set your prisoners free from the waterless pit.** (Zech. 9:11 NAU)

**“Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him;** but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or **in the age to come.** (Matt. 12:32 NKJ)

25 **“Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live.**

26 **“For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself,**

27 **“and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man.**

28 **“Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice**

29 **“and come forth— those who have done good, to the resurrection of life,** and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation. (Jn. 5:25-29 NKJ)

25 For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, **that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.**

26 **And so all Israel will be saved,** as it is written: “The Deliverer will come out of Zion, And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob;

27 For this is My covenant with them, When I take away their sins.”

28 Concerning the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but concerning the election they are beloved for the sake of the fathers.

29 For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

30 For as you were once disobedient to God, yet have now obtained mercy through their disobedience,

31 even so these also have now been disobedient, that through the mercy shown you they also may obtain mercy.

32 **For God has committed them all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all.** (Rom. 11:25-32 NKJ)

18 For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, **being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit,**

19 **by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison,** (1 Pet. 3:18-19 NKJ)

**For this reason the gospel was preached also to those who are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to**

**God in the spirit.** (1 Pet. 4:6 NKJ)

deliver such a one to Satan **for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.** (1 Cor. 5:5 NKJ)

8 Therefore He says: **“When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men.”**

9 (Now this, “He ascended “– what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth?

10 He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.) (Eph. 4:8-10 NKJ)

27 And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment,

28 so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. **To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.** (Heb. 9:27-28 NKJ)

12 And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. **And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life.** And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.

13 The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works.

14 Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

15 And **anyone not found written in the Book of Life** was cast into the lake of fire. (Rev. 20:11-15 NKJ)

***Scripture that liken deliverance in life, to deliverance in the afterlife. The association is so strong its reasonable to say they believed it happens in the afterlife also:***

5 “For the waves of death encompassed me; The torrents of destruction overwhelmed me;

6 **The cords of Sheol surrounded me;** The snares of death confronted me.

7 “In my distress I called upon the LORD, Yes, I cried to my God; And from His temple He heard my voice, And my cry for help came into His ears. (2 Sam. 22:5-7 NAU)

For You have **delivered my soul from death,** Indeed my feet from stumbling, So that I may walk before God In the light of the living. (Ps. 56:13 NAU)

18 You have ascended on high, **You have led captive Your captives;** You have received gifts among men, Even among the rebellious also, that the LORD God may dwell there.

19 Blessed be the Lord, who daily bears our burden, The God who is our salvation. Selah.

20 God is to us a God of deliverances; And **to GOD the Lord belong escapes from death.** (Ps. 68:18-20 NAU)

13 But as for me, my prayer is to Thee, O LORD, at an acceptable time; O God, in the greatness of Thy lovingkindness, Answer me with Thy saving truth.

14 **Deliver me from the mire, and do not let me sink;** May I be delivered from my foes, and from the deep waters.

15 **May the flood of water not overflow me, And may the deep not swallow me up, And may the pit not shut its mouth on me.**

16 Answer me, O LORD, for Thy lovingkindness is good; According to the greatness of Thy compassion, turn to me,

17 And do not hide Thy face from Thy servant, For I am in distress; answer me quickly.

18 **Oh draw near to my soul and redeem it;** Ransom me because of my enemies! (Ps. 69:13-18 NAS)

18 This will be written for the generation to come, That a people yet to be created may praise the LORD.

19 For He looked down from His holy height; From heaven the LORD gazed upon the earth,

20 To hear the groaning of the prisoner, **To set free those who were doomed to death,**

21 That men may tell of the name of the LORD in Zion And His praise in Jerusalem,

22 When the peoples are gathered together, And the kingdoms, to serve the LORD. (Ps. 102:18-22 NAU)

1 I love the LORD, because He hears My voice and my supplications.

2 Because He has inclined His ear to me, Therefore I shall call upon Him as long as I live.

3 **The cords of death encompassed me And the terrors of Sheol came upon me; I found distress and sorrow.**

4 Then I called upon the name of the LORD: "O LORD, I beseech You, save my life!"

5 Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; Yes, our God is compassionate.

6 The LORD preserves the simple; **I was brought low, and He saved me.**

7 Return to your rest, O my soul, For the LORD has dealt bountifully with you.

8 For **You have rescued my soul from death,** My eyes from tears, My feet from stumbling.

9 I shall walk before the LORD In the land of the living (Ps. 116:1-9 NAU)

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 1 NAU)

Go here for more:

*What If Hebrews 9:27–28 Isn't About Condemnation, but Redemption?*

The “second chance” was well known in the ancient church.

Clement of Alexandria (150–215) Christian teacher at Alexandria who spent his twilight years with his friend Alexander when he became bishop of Jerusalem, had this to say about souls in Hades:

*So I think it is demonstrated that God (being good) and the Lord (being powerful) both save with a righteousness and equality that extends to all who turn to God, whether here or elsewhere. For it is not here alone that the active power of God is present. Rather, it is everywhere and is always at work.... For it is not right that those persons [who died before Christ] should be condemned without trial, and that those alone who lived after His coming should have the advantage of the divine righteousness. Clement of Alexandria (c. 195, EE Eastern), 2.491. Dead, Intermediate State of The. (1998). In D. W. Bercot (Ed.), A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs: A Reference Guide to More than 700 Topics Discussed by the Early Church Fathers (p. 192). Hendrickson Publishers.*

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