11110 - What Is al-Barzakh?

the question

What is Barzakh? Please explain in details? Would you please tell me what kind of punishment there is in al-Brzakh and for which sins?

Summary of answer

1. Al-Barzakh is the period between a person's death and his resurrection on the Day of Resurrection.
2. Whoever dies as a Muslim, obeying Allah, will be in a blessed state, and whoever dies as a disbeliever, disobeying Allah, will be punished.
3. The punishments vary according to the sins committed. Please see the answer below for details.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

What is al-Barzakh?

What is meant by al-barzakh is the period between a person's death and his resurrection on the Day of Resurrection. Whoever dies as a Muslim, obeying Allaah, will be in a blessed state , and whoever dies as a kafir, disobeying Allaah, will be punished. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning);

“The Fire, they are exposed to it, morning and afternoon. And on the Day when the Hour will be established (it will be said to the angels): ‘Cause Fir‘aun’s (Pharaoh) people to enter the severest torment!’” [Ghafir 40:46]

Punishment in al-Barzakh

The punishments vary according to the sins committed. A hadeeth was narrated in Saheeh al-Bukhari which describes the torments of al-barzakh which will befall some of those who committed major sins.

Samurah ibn Jundub (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) often used to ask his Companions, 'Did any one of you see a dream?' So dreams would be described to him by those who Allah willed should speak. One morning, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

"Last night, two people came to me (in a dream), and woke me up and said, 'Let's go!' I set out with them, and we came across a man who was lying down, with another man standing over him, holding a big rock. He threw the rock at the man's head, smashing it.

The rock rolled away, and the one who had thrown it followed it, and picked it up. By the time he came back to the man, his head had been restored to its former state. Then he (the one who had thrown the rock) did the same as he had done before. I said to my two companions, 'Subhan Allah! Who are these two persons?' They said, 'Move on!' So we went on, and came to a man who was lying flat on his back, with another man standing over him, holding an iron hook. He put the hook in the man's mouth and tore off that side of his face to the back (of his neck), and he tore his nose and his eye from front to back in a similar manner. Then he turned to the other side of the man's face and did likewise. No sooner had he finished the second side but the first side was restored to its former state, then he went back and did the same thing again. I said to my two companions, 'Subhan Allah! Who are these two persons?'

They said, 'Move on!' So we went on, and came to something like a tannoor (a kind of oven, lined with clay, usually used for baking bread). – I think the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said, in that oven there was much noise and voices. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) added: - We looked into it and saw naked men and women. A flame of fire was reaching them from underneath, and when it reached them, they cried out loudly. I asked

them, ‘Who are these?’ They said to me, ‘Move on!’ So we went on and came to a river – I think he said, red like blood. – In the river there was a man swimming, and on the bank there was a man who had gathered many stones. Whilst the swimmer was swimming, the man who had gathered the stones approached him. The swimmer opened his mouth and the man on the bank threw a stone into it, then the swimmer carried on swimming.

Each time he came back, he opened his mouth again, and the man on the bank threw another stone into his mouth. I said to my two companions, ‘Who are these two persons?’ They said, ‘Move on, move on!’ We went on and came to a man who had the most repulsive appearance imaginable. Beside him there was a fire, which he was kindling, and he was running around it. I asked my companions, ‘Who is this man?’ They said, ‘Move on, move on!’ So we went on until we reached a garden of deep green dense vegetation, with all kinds of spring colours. In the midst of this garden was a very tall man, whose head I could hardly see because of his great height. Around him there were children, a great number such as I have never seen. I said to my companions, ‘who is this man, and who are these children?’

They said, ‘Move on, move on!’ So we went on, until we came to a huge garden, bigger and better than any I have ever seen. My two companions said to me, ‘Go up.’ So we went up into it, until we reached a city built of gold and silver bricks. We went to the gate and asked for it to be opened. It was opened and we entered the city, where we found men with one side of their bodies more handsome than the most handsome person you have ever seen, and the other side uglier than the ugliest person you have ever seen. My two companions ordered those men to throw themselves into the river. There was a river flowing through the city, and its water was pure white. The men went and threw themselves in the river, and came out with the ugliness in their bodies gone, and they were in the best shape. (My two companions) said to me, ‘This is the Paradise of ‘Aden (the Garden of Eden), and that is your place.’ I looked up and saw a palace like a white cloud. They said to me, ‘That is your place.’ I said to them, ‘May Allah bless you both, let me enter it.’

They said, ‘For now you will not enter it, but you shall enter it (one day).’ I said to them, I have seen many wonders this night. What do all these things mean that I have seen?’ They said: ‘We

will tell you. The first man you came across, whose head was being smashed with the rock, is the man who studies the Quran then he neither recites it nor acts upon it, and he goes to sleep, neglecting the obligatory prayers. The man you came across whose mouth, nose and ears were being torn from front to back, is the man who goes out of his house in the morning and tells a lie that is so serious that it spreads all over the world. The naked men and women whom you saw in a structure that resembled an oven are the adulterers and adulteresses. The man you saw swimming in the river with rocks being thrown into his mouth is the one who consumed riba (usury).

The ugly-looking man whom you saw kindling a fire and walking around it was Malik, the keeper of Hell. The tall man whom you saw in the garden was Ibraheem, and the children around him were the children who died (young) in a state of fitrah (natural state of mankind, i.e., Islam).' – Some of the Muslims asked, 'O Messenger of Allah, what about the children of the mushrikeen?' He said, 'And the children of the mushrikeen too.' – 'As for the men who were half handsome and half ugly, they were people who had mixed a good deed with another deed that was bad, but Allah forgave them.'" (Narrated by Muslim, no. 7047)

For more about the issues related to life after death, please see these answers: 10403 , 9381 , and 45325 .

And Almighty Allah knows best.