21212 - How Long Does the Punishment of the Grave Last?

the question

I would like to ask about the grave: after the two angels have finished questioning the person in his grave, will the evildoer continue to be tormented in his grave until the Hour begins?

Also, will the believer continue to enjoy delight until the Hour begins? Or does that simply last for one day which comes to an end, after which the person becomes just a dead body?

Is there any evidence to indicate that the person in his grave moves into a new life which will last until the Hour begins? Please answer me, may Allah bless you.

Summary of answer

The life in al-barzakh starts after death and ends when the Hour begins. Quranic verses and hadiths indicate that the torment of the grave is real and that it is ongoing in the case of some people.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Stages of man’s life

Man’s life is divided into three sections:

1. The life of this world, which ends with death.
2. The life in al-barzakh, which starts after death and ends when the Hour begins.
3. The life of the Hereafter, which begins after the people are raised from their graves, and is spent either in Paradise (we ask Allah of His Bounty) or in Hell (we seek refuge with Allah).

How long is life in al-barzakh?

So the life of al-barzakh lasts from after a person dies until he is resurrected, whether he is buried in a grave or not, whether he is burned or eaten by wild animals. The evidence that points to this life is the hadith narrated from the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), who said that after the deceased is placed in his grave, he can hear the footsteps of his family (as they walk away from the grave).

This life (in al-barzakh) will either be filled with delight, or it will be hellish, and the grave will either be one of the gardens of Paradise or one of the ditches of Hell.

What indicates that there will be either delight or torment (in al-barzakh) is the verse in which Allah says concerning the people of Pharaoh:

“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`awn’s (Pharaoh) people to enter the severest torment!’” [Ghafir 40:46 – interpretation of the meaning]

Ibn Mas’ud said: “The souls of the people of Pharaoh and those of their ilk among the disbelievers are shown the Fire morning and evening, and they are told, this is your abode.”

Ibn Kathir said: “This verse is the main basis of the Sunni’s belief in the torment of al-barzakh in the grave.” (Tafsir Ibn Kathir, 4/82)

Al-Qurtubi said:

“Some of the scholars quoted as evidence to prove the torment of the grave the phrase “The Fire, they are exposed to it, morning and afternoon” [Ghafir 40:46]. A similar view was expressed by Mujahid, ‘Ikrimah, Muqatil and Muhammad ibn Ka`b, all of whom said that this verse is proof of the torment of the grave . Do you not see that it says concerning the torment of the Hereafter: “And on the Day when the Hour will be established (it will be said to the angels): ‘Cause Fir‘awn’s (Pharaoh) people to enter the severest torment!”?” (Tafsir al-Qurtubi, 15/319)

`Abd-Allah ibn `Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) said: “The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: ‘When any one of you dies, he is shown his place morning and evening. If he is one of the people of Paradise then he is one of the people of Paradise, and if he is one of the people of Hell, then he is one of the people of Hell.’” (Narrated by al-Bukhari, Bid’ al-Khalq, 3001; Muslim, al-Jannah wa sifat na’imiha, 2866)

`Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her) narrated that a Jewish woman entered upon her and mentioned the torment of the grave, and said to her, “May Allah protect you from the torment of the grave!” `Aishah asked the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) about the torment of the grave, and he said, “Yes, the torment of the grave.” `Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her) said: “I never saw the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) pray any prayer after that but he sought refuge with Allah from the torment of the grave.” (Narrated by al-Bukhari, al-Janaiz, 1283; Muslim, al-Kusuf, 903)

These verses and hadiths indicate that the torment of the grave is real and that it is ongoing in the case of some people.

Shaykh Ibn ‘Uthaymin (may Allah have mercy on him and save him from the torment of the grave) said:

If a person is a disbeliever (we seek refuge with Allah), then there is no way that the delight will ever reach him, and his torment will be continuous . If a person was a sinner but he was a believer, then his torment in the grave will be commensurate with his sin, and perhaps the punishment for his sin will take less time than the time in al-barzakh between his death and the onset of the Hour, in which case it will cease.” (Al-Sharh al-Mumti’, vol. 3, p. 253)

And Allah knows best.