



## Lenten Apologetics Bible Study Series



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## Weekly Topics



- **March 7th**
  - “Why do I need the Church when I have the Bible?”
- **March 14th**
  - “Is the Papacy in the Bible?”
- **March 21st**
  - “Why do Catholics Pray to Mary and the Saints?”
- **March 28th**
  - “Is the Eucharist Truly the Body and Blood of Christ?”
- **April 4th**
  - *“Is Purgatory in the Bible?”*
- **April 11th**
  - “Why the Catholic Church?”



## Is Purgatory in the Bible?



- Purgatory Defined
- Four Last Things
- Guilt versus Punishment
- Mortal versus Venial Sin
- Catholic Belief about Purgatory
- References to Purgatory in Scripture
- Historical References to Purgatory

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## Purgatory Defined



- Purgatory comes from the verb “purge” meaning “to purify or cleanse” (Latin = *purgatorio*)
- Purgatory is a state of final purification after death and before entrance into heaven for those who died in God’s friendship, but were only imperfectly purified; a final cleansing of human imperfection before one is able to enter the joy of heaven (CCC 1031; cf. 1472)
- The word “purgatory” is not found in the Bible
  - Neither are the words “Trinity” nor “Incarnation”

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## Four Last Things



- **Death** (end of our earthly life)
- **Judgment** (by Christ)
  - Particular Judgment (each individual at the moment of death)
  - General Judgment (all men on the last day)
- **Heaven** (Beatific Vision)
  - Directly if in a state of perfect holiness (without sin or reparation due to sin)
  - Purgatory for those who die without perfect holiness (with venial sins or reparation due to sin)
- **Hell** (Exclusion from Communion with God)
  - Eternal state to which the wicked are condemned (without God)



## Guilt versus Punishment



- God forgives the **guilt** of sin but still requires **punishment** (reparation, atonement, expiation)
  - “David said to Nathan, ‘I have sinned against the Lord.’ Nathan answered David, ‘The Lord on His part has forgiven your sin; you shall not die. But since you have utterly spurned the Lord by this deed, the child born to you must surely die.” (2 Sam 12:13-14)
  - God forgave the guilt of David’s sin, but He still required reparation in the form of suffering
  - Example: A father forgives his son for breaking a window but still insists that the damages be repaired



## Mortal versus Venial Sin



- Mortal (deadly) sin
  - A grave infraction of the law of God that destroys the divine life in the soul of the sinner (sanctifying grace), constituting a turn away from God (CCC 1855, 1857)
  - For a sin to be mortal, three conditions must be present:
    - Grave matter
    - Full knowledge of the evil of the act
    - Full consent of the will



## Mortal versus Venial (Cont.)



- Venial (not deadly) sin
  - Sin which does not destroy the divine life in the soul, as does mortal sin, though it diminishes and wounds it (CCC 1855)
  - Venial sin is:
    - The failure to observe necessary moderation, in lesser matters of the moral law or;
    - In grave matters acting without full knowledge or complete consent (CCC 1862)



## Mortal versus Venial (Cont.)



- Mortal Sin in Scripture
  - “If any one sees his brother committing what is not a mortal sin, he will ask, and God will give him life for those whose sin is not mortal. There is sin which is mortal; I do not say that one is to pray for that.” (1 Jn 5:16)
- Venial Sin in Scripture
  - “All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin which is not mortal.” (1 Jn 5:17)
  - “...each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire conceives and brings forth sin, and when sin reaches maturity it gives birth to death.” (Jas 1:14-15)



## Catholic Belief about Purgatory



- Those who die in charity have their souls cleansed after death by purgatorial and purifying penalties. Intercession of the living faithful benefit them. (Second Ecumenical Council of Lyons, A.D. 1274)
- “The Catholic Church, by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, in accordance with Sacred Scripture and the ancient tradition of the Fathers (teaches) that there is a purgatory and that the souls detained there are helped by the prayers of the faithful and especially by the acceptable sacrifice of the altar.” (Council of Trent, *De Purgatorio*)



## Catholic Belief about Purgatory (Cont.)



- Purgatory is a temporary state of purification for the imperfect saints
  - The souls of the just who have died in the state of grace but with venial sins or with reparation due for forgiven mortal and venial sins
  - All remaining reparation for sin is made
  - All remaining self-love is purged and purified until only love of God remains
- Purgatory is for those who do not merit hell
  - They are in a state of grace
  - They are not pure enough for heaven, where “nothing unclean will enter” (Rev. 21:27)



## Holy Scripture



- **God is perfect holiness**
  - “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts!’ they [the Seraphim] cried one to the other.” (Is 6:3)
- **We are called to that same holiness**
  - “So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect.” (Mt 5:48)
  - “...as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in every aspect of your conduct, for it is written, ‘Be holy because I am holy.’” (1 Pet 1:15-16)
- **Without perfect holiness, we cannot see God in heaven**
  - “Strive for peace with everyone, and for that holiness without which no one will see the Lord.” (Heb 12:14)
  - “...nothing unclean will enter it [heaven].” (Rev 21:27)



## Points to Remember



- Only imperfect saints in the state of grace enter Purgatory
  - It is not a “second chance” for those who die in unrepented mortal sin
- Purgatory exists for purification and reparation
  - The effects of sin are purged
  - The punishments due to sin are paid
- Purgatory is only temporary
  - Once the imperfect saints are purified they enter heaven
  - Everyone in Purgatory will eventually go to heaven
  - Only heaven and hell will remain eternally



## References to Purgatory in Scripture



- “And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or *in the age to come*.” (Mt 12:32)
  - Jesus implies that some sins can be forgiven in the next world
  - Sin cannot be forgiven in Hell
  - There is no sin to be forgiven in heaven
  - Purgatory is the only logical option where any remission of sin in the next world can occur



## References to Purgatory in Scripture (Cont.)



- “But if someone’s work is burned up, that one will suffer loss; the person will be saved, but only as through fire.” (1 Cor 3:15)
  - This cannot refer to eternal loss in hell because no one is saved there
  - It cannot refer to heaven because no one suffers there
  - It can only refer to a middle state where the soul temporarily suffers loss so that it may gain heaven
  - This is essentially the definition of Purgatory



## References to Purgatory in Scripture (Cont.)



- “For Christ also suffered for sins once, the righteous for the sake of the unrighteous, that he might lead you to God. Put to death in the flesh, he was brought to life in the spirit. In it he also went to preach to the spirits in prison, who had once been disobedient while God patiently waited in the days of Noah during the building of the ark, in which a few persons, eight in all, were saved through water.” (1 Pet 3:18-20)
- “For this is why the gospel was preached even to the dead that, though condemned in the flesh in human estimation, they might live in the spirit in the estimation of God.” (1 Peter 4:6)





## References to Purgatory in Scripture (Cont.)



- Note that it is a *prison for disobedient spirits*, and yet they were saved when Jesus preached to them
- This prison is not hell because no one is saved from hell
- Probably not the “limbo of the fathers” (aka “Abraham’s bosom” where the righteous souls of the OT waited for Jesus to open the gates of heaven)
- Peter is describing a temporary state for disobedient souls who were eventually saved
  - Third place between heaven (righteous) and hell

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## References to Purgatory in Scripture (Cont.)



- “...for if he were not expecting the fallen to rise again, it would have been useless and foolish to pray for them in death. But if he did this with a view to the splendid reward that awaits those who had gone to rest in godliness, it was a holy and pious thought. Thus he made atonement for the dead that they might be freed from this sin.”  
(2 Mc 12:44-46)
  - It is impossible to aid souls in heaven (they have no need), and equally impossible to aid souls in hell (they have no hope)

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## References to Purgatory in Scripture (Cont.)



- Praying for the dead presumes souls in a middle state where atonement for sin can be made
- Proof text from Maccabees explicitly affirms an intermediate state where the faithful departed make atonement for their sins
- Maccabees is a historical book which accurately reflects the religious character of the Jews of the second century BC
- As a minimum it proves that Jews prayed for their dead (and still do today)



## Prayers and Practices for the Dead



- “May the Lord grant mercy to the family of Onesiphorus because he often gave me new heart and was not ashamed of my chains... May the Lord grant him to find mercy from the Lord on that day.”  
(2 Tim 1:16-18)
  - Paul prays for his departed friend Onesiphorus
  - This only makes sense if Paul thought that his friend could be helped by prayer



## Prayers and Practices for the Dead (Cont.)



- “Otherwise, what will people accomplish by having themselves baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, then why are they having themselves baptized for them?” (1 Cor 15:29-30)
  - Paul is arguing for the reality of the resurrection of the body
  - Without condemning or approving, he uses the example of the practice of people having themselves baptized on behalf of the dead
  - The dead cannot be helped if there is no intermediate state of purification (Paul implies Purgatory exists)



## Historical References to Purgatory



- Ancient Christian tomb inscriptions frequently contained an appeal for prayers for the dead
- The epitaph of Abercius [180 AD] reads:
  - “The citizen of a prominent city, I erected this while I lived, that I might have a resting place for my body. Abercius is my name, a disciple of the chaste shepherd who feeds his sheep on the mountains and in the fields, who has great eyes surveying everywhere, who taught me the faithful writings of life. Standing by, I, Abercius ordered this to be inscribed; truly I was in my seventy second year. May everyone who is in accord with this and who understands it pray for Abercius.” (Jurgens, p.78, #187)



## Historical References to Purgatory (Cont.)



- A place of purgation exists, where those souls of whom further expiation (atonement) is required undergo temporary punishment
  - Tertullian, The Soul [inter A.D. 208/212], Jurgens, pp. 144-145, #352
  - Lactantius, The Divine Institutions [inter A.D. 304-310], Jurgens, pp. 269-270, #646
  - St. Augustine [A.D. 354-430], Expositions on the Psalms, 37:3, Willis, pp. 456-457, and The City of God, Bk 21, Chap. 31 and Chap. 24, Willis, p. 457



## Historical References to Purgatory (Cont.)



- The souls of the dead detained in purgatory can be aided by the suffrages (intercessory prayers) of the living
  - Epitaph of Pectorius [inter A.D. 350-400], Jurgens, p. 79, #187a
  - Tertullian, The Crown [A.D. 211], Jurgens, p. 151, #367 and Monogamy [post A.D. 213], Jurgens p. 158, #382
  - St. Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures [ca. A.D. 350], Jurgens, p. 363, #852 and #853
  - St. Basil the Great, Homilies on the Psalms 7:2,6 (A.D. 375)
  - St. John Chrysostom, Homilies on the Epistle to the Philippians 3:4-10 (A.D. 398)



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- *The Faith of the Early Fathers, Vol 1* by William A. Jurgens, Liturgical Press
- *The Teachings of the Church Fathers* by John R. Willis, S.J., Ignatius
- *Any Friend of God's Is a Friend of Mine* by Patrick Madrid, Basilica Press



## References (Cont.)



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## Question and Answer



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