

NORTHEAST HOUSTON COMMUNITY CHURCH

Catholicism to What We Believe Pt3

Doctrine of Purgatory

Scripture Text: 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18

05/27/2018

1 Thessalonians 4:13–18 (NKJV) ¹³ But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. ¹⁴ For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. ¹⁵ For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive *and* remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. ¹⁸ Therefore comfort one another with these words.

**“If you tell a big enough lie and tell it frequently enough, it will be believed.” —
Adolf Hitler**

Catholic Bible

The catholic Bible contains 46 books in the old testament, 27 New Testaments a total of 73 where as the mainstream Christian Bible has 66 books.

The Catholic New Testament canon is identical to that of the Protestants other than some minor translation differences. Our difference lies in the contents of the Old Testament where we have **Tobit, Judith, 1 and 2 Maccabees, Wisdom, Sirach, Baruch and additions to Esther and Daniel.** These books were called *apocryphal* by the Protestants and *deuterocanonical* (Second canon) by the Catholics

<https://www.catholic.org/bible/>

Tobit and **Judith** are fascinating stories that enjoyed popularity in both Jewish and Christian circles.

1st and 2nd Maccabees give us the history of the war for freedom and the pious practice of prayers for the departed.

Sirach or **Ecclesiasticus** meaning “Church Book” was widely used to give moral teaching to the catechumens.

Readings from **Wisdom** are used at **funeral** because of its clear teaching on immortality.

From one of these books comes a very controversial Catholic doctrine, the Doctrine of Purgatory.

Purgatory Doctrine:

Purgatory: an intermediate state after death for expiatory (to put an end to) purification; specifically: a place or state of punishment wherein according to Roman Catholic doctrine the souls of those who die in God's grace may make satisfaction for past sins and so become fit for heaven
2: a place or state of temporary suffering or misery (MW)

The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches:

All who die in God's grace, but still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation; but after death they undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven (1030).

<https://www.catholic.com/magazine/online-edition/is-purgatory-in-the-bible>

Eastern Orthodox Churches believe in the possibility of a change of situation for the souls of the dead through the prayers of the living and the offering of the [Divine Liturgy](#), and many Orthodox, especially among ascetics, believes in the possibility of after-death purification.

ANSWER: This is similar to the practice of the LDS who believe they can change the state of the dead by the living being baptized for the dead. The Bible does not teach that unless you choose to distort and twist the meaning of some verses, which we will address later. I refer you to the story of Lazarus and the rich man which I will have to speak more about, because this could be their idea of purgatory.

Roman Catholic belief in after-life purification is based on the practice of praying for the dead, which is mentioned in *2 Maccabees 12:42-44*.

Here are a few verses of scripture they use to support the purgatory doctrine.

First let's look at their main foundation verse taken from the Apocryphal book 2 *Maccabees 12:42-46*.

2 Maccabees 12: 46 It is therefore a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from sins.

Keep in mind that there has been much dispute as to whether this book should be considered as one inspired by God for the purposes outlined in 2 Timothy.

2 Timothy 3:16 (NKJV) 16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,

In my reading I found the books, 1st and 2nd Maccabees to be more of a historical rather than a book of doctrine, reproof or instructions in righteousness.

The next verse they use is

Matthew 5:25–26 (NKJV) ²⁵ *Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison.* ²⁶ *Assuredly, I say to you, **you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny.***

They teach that the word “prison” refers to the place of purgatory a place of torment leading to cleansing (repayment or satisfaction of a debt or charge.)

It also implies that we can facilitate our release by making payment. If this is true then the work done by Christ was not enough, we needed to add at least a “penny.”

Their next supporting verse is:

Matthew 12:32 (NKJV) ³² *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.***

I believe the reference to “age” is the age they were in and we are still in. That or this age ends when the reapers (angels) come to separate the wheat from the tares.

The last one I will address is claimed by them to be the most straightforward text in all of Scripture I Corinthians 3:11-15:

1 Corinthians 3:11–15 (NKJV) ¹¹ *For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.* ¹² *Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw,* ¹³ ***each one’s work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one’s work, of what sort it is.*** ¹⁴ *If anyone’s work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward.* ¹⁵ ***If anyone’s work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.***

<https://www.catholic.com/magazine/online-edition/is-purgatory-in-the-bible>

Answer: This is a twist used to imply that the sins of a person will be burned up and will cause that person to be saved. They imply that the “fire” will purify the person into a more complete position of salvation. I disagree. This passage is talking about our rewards given by Jesus. Our rewards have nothing to do with our salvation. It is those that are already saved that will stand to receive rewards. At that point our salvation is not earned or in jeopardy.

To promote this doctrine is to say again that Christ is not all you need for salvation.

What about the question that it seems like the rich man in the story of Lazarus and the rich man, is in a place described as purgatory being tormented by fire.

*Luke 16:22–24 (NKJV) ²² So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham’s bosom. **The rich man also died and was buried.** ²³ **And being in torments in Hades,** he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. ²⁴*

*“Then he cried and said, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; **for I am tormented in this flame.**’*

To some this may seem like it supports the purgatory doctrine. Well according to their own definition, it has to be assumed that the rich man as well as others dies in “God’s grace”

*Purgatory - a place or state of punishment the souls of those who die **in God’s grace** may make satisfaction for past sins and so become fit for heaven.*

My thinking is that if there is a place (temporary) where we go after death then it seems like the believer will go to “paradise” as did Lazarus and the sinner will go to hades as stated here. We all will remain until Christ returns and believers will return with Him *1 Thessalonians 4:16 (NKJV) ¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.*

This refers, I believe, to our bodies that will be changed while our soul or spirit was with Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:8 (NKJV) ⁸ We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord. (1 Thessalonians 4:13-14)

And the sinners will rise at the white throne of judgment.

*Revelation 20:13–15 (NKJV) 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.***

All unrighteous dead will appear at the Great White Throne Judgment; none will escape. All the places that have held the bodies of the unrighteous dead will yield up new bodies suited for hell. 1(John MacArthur Commentary.

¹ MacArthur, J., Jr. (Ed.). (1997). [The MacArthur Study Bible](#) (electronic ed., p. 2022). Nashville, TN: Word Pub.

In summary, I do not believe in a place called purgatory, nor do I believe we can effectively pray or be baptized for the dead in order to change their position relating to salvation. Nor do I believe that there is complete salvation in any other way or person other than Jesus Christ.

Message Scriptures: **1 Thessalonians 4:13–18**, *2 Maccabees 12:42-46*, *2 Timothy 3:16*, *Matthew 5:25–26*, *Matthew 12:32*, *1 Corinthians 3:11–15*, *Luke 16:22–24*, *1 Thessalonians 4:16*, *2 Corinthians 5:8*

END