

I. Purgatory--A State After Death of Suffering and Forgiveness

Matt. 5:26,18:34; Luke 12:58-59 – Jesus teaches us, “Come to terms with your opponent or you will be handed over to the judge and thrown into prison. You will not get out until you have paid the last penny.”

The word “opponent” (antidikos) is likely a reference to the devil (see the same word for devil in 1 Pet. 5:8) who is an accuser against man (c.f. Job 1.6-12; Zech. 3.1; Rev. 12.10), and God is the judge. If we have not adequately dealt with satan and sin in this life, we will be held in a temporary state called a prison, and we won’t get out until we have satisfied our entire debt to God. This “prison” is purgatory where we will not get out until the last penny is paid.

Matt. 5:48 - Jesus says, "be perfect, even as your heavenly Father is perfect."

We are only made perfect through purification, and in Catholic teaching, this purification, if not completed on earth, is continued in a transitional state we call purgatory.

Matt. 12:32 – Jesus says, “And anyone who says a word against the Son of man will be forgiven; but no one who speaks against the Holy Spirit will be forgiven either in this world or in the next.”

Jesus thus clearly provides that there is forgiveness after death. The phrase “in the next” (from the Greek “en to mellonti”) generally refers to the afterlife (see, for example, Mark 10.30; Luke 18.30; 20.34-35; Eph. 1.21 for similar language). Forgiveness is not necessary in heaven, and there is no forgiveness in hell. This proves that there is another state after death, and the Church for 2,000 years has called this state purgatory.

Luke 12:47-48 - when the Master comes (at the end of time), some will receive light or heavy beatings but will live.

This state is not heaven or hell, because in heaven there are no beatings, and in hell we will no longer live with the Master.

Luke 16:19-31 –the Story of Dives and Lazarus

In this story, we see that the dead rich man is suffering but still feels compassion for his brothers and wants to warn them of his place of suffering. But there is no suffering in heaven or compassion in hell because compassion is a grace from God and those in hell are deprived from God's graces for all eternity. So where is the rich man? He is in purgatory.

1 Cor. 15:29-30 - Paul mentions people being baptized on behalf of the dead, in the context of atoning for their sins (people are baptized on the dead's behalf so the dead can be raised).

These people cannot be in heaven because they are still with sin, but they also cannot be in hell because their sins can no longer be atoned for. They are in purgatory. These verses directly correspond to 2 Macc. 12:44-45 which also shows specific prayers for the dead, so that they may be forgiven of their sin.

2 Tim. 1:16-18 - Onesiphorus is dead but Paul asks for mercy on him "on that day."

Paul's use of "that day" demonstrates its eschatological usage (see, for example, Rom. 2.5,16; 1 Cor. 1.8; 3.13; 5.5; 2 Cor. 1.14; Phil. 1.6,10; 2.16; 1 Thess. 5.2,4,5,8; 2 Thess. 2.2,3; 2 Tim. 4.8). Of course, there is no need for mercy in heaven, and there is no mercy given in hell. Where is Onesiphorus? He is in purgatory.

Heb. 12:14 - without holiness no one will see the Lord.

We need final sanctification to attain true holiness before God, and this process occurs during our lives and, if not completed during our lives, in the transitional state of purgatory.

Heb. 12:23 - the spirits of just men who died in godliness are "made" perfect.

They do not necessarily arrive perfect. They are made perfect after their death. But those in heaven are already perfect, and those in hell can no longer be made perfect. These spirits are in purgatory.

1 Peter 3:19; 4:6 - Jesus preached to the spirits in the "prison."

These are the righteous souls being purified for the beatific vision.

Rev. 21:4 - God shall wipe away their tears, and there will be no mourning or pain, but only after the coming of the new heaven and the passing away of the current heaven and earth.

Note the elimination of tears and pain only occurs at the end of time. But there is no mourning or pain in heaven, and God will not wipe away their tears in hell. These are the souls experiencing purgatory.

Rev. 21:27 - nothing unclean shall enter heaven.

The word "unclean" comes from the Greek word "koinon" which refers to a spiritual corruption. Even the propensity to sin is spiritually corrupt, or considered unclean, and must be purified before entering heaven. It is amazing how many Protestants do not want to believe in purgatory. Purgatory exists because of the mercy of God. If there were no purgatory, this would also likely mean no salvation for most people. God is merciful indeed.

Luke 23:43 – many Protestants argue that, because Jesus sent the good thief right to heaven, there can be no purgatory.

There are several rebuttals. First, when Jesus uses the word "paradise," He did not mean heaven. Paradise, from the Hebrew "sheol," meant the realm of the righteous dead. This was the place of the dead who were destined for heaven, but who were captive until the Lord's resurrection. Second, since there was no punctuation in the original manuscript, Jesus' statement "I say to you today you will be with me in paradise" does not mean there was a comma after the first word "you." This means Jesus could have said, "I say to you today, you will be with me in paradise" (meaning, Jesus could have emphasized with exclamation his statement was "today" or "now," and that some time in the future the good thief would go to heaven). Third, even if the thief went straight to heaven, this does not prove there is no purgatory (those who are fully sanctified in this life – perhaps by a bloody and repentant death – could be ready for admission in to heaven).

Gen. 50:10; Num. 20:29; Deut. 34:8 - here are some examples of ritual prayer and penitent mourning for the dead for specific periods of time.

The Jewish understanding of these practices was that the prayers freed the souls from their painful state of purification, and expedited their journey to God.

Baruch 3:4 - Baruch asks the Lord to hear the prayers of the dead of Israel.

Prayers for the dead are unnecessary in heaven and unnecessary in hell. These dead are in purgatory.

Zech. 9:11 - God, through the blood of His covenant, will set those free from the waterless pit, a spiritual abode of suffering which the Church calls purgatory.

2 Macc. 12:38-46 **38** Judas rallied his army and went to the city of Adullam. As the seventh day was approaching, they purified themselves according to custom and kept the sabbath there. **39** On the following day, since the task had now become urgent, Judas and his companions went to gather up the bodies of the fallen and bury them with their kindred in their ancestral tombs. **40** But under the tunic of each of the dead they found amulets sacred to the idols of Jamnia, which the law forbids the Jews to wear. So it was clear to all that this was why these men had fallen. **41** They all therefore praised the ways of the Lord, the just judge who brings to light the things that are hidden. **42** Turning to supplication, they prayed that the sinful deed might be fully blotted out. The noble Judas exhorted the people to keep themselves free from sin, for they had seen with their own eyes what had happened because of the sin of those who had fallen. **43** He then took up a collection among all his soldiers, amounting to two thousand silver drachmas, which he sent to Jerusalem to provide for an expiatory sacrifice. In doing this he acted in a very excellent and noble way, inasmuch as he had the resurrection in mind; **44** for if he were not expecting the fallen to rise again, it would have been superfluous and foolish to pray for the dead. **45** 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. **46** Thus he made atonement for the dead that they might be absolved from their sin.

The prayers for the dead help free them from sin and help them to the reward of heaven. Those in heaven have no sin, and those in hell can no longer be freed from sin. They are in purgatory. Luther was particularly troubled with these verses because he rejected the age-old teaching of purgatory. As a result, he removed Maccabees from the canon of the Bible.

...From ScriptureCatholic.com