

# What Is The Catholic Doctrine Of Purgatory?

## Bible Answers About Denominations

One of the fundamental beliefs of Roman Catholicism is the belief in the existence of an intermediate state called Purgatory. Though there is no biblical basis for this doctrine, there is strong philosophical need for it in Roman Catholic theology. The Catholic Church views salvation as the objective adornment of the soul. It is a process which starts at baptism through which sanctifying grace is initially infused. This makes the soul holy and inherently pleasing to God. The goal is to transform the essential character of the soul into something which is in itself objectively good. It is, therefore, only reasonable to require the complete cleansing of every vestige of sin before the soul can come into the presence of God. Purgatory, therefore, is the logical extension of the Church's process of salvation.

Purgatory is defined by The Baltimore Catechism, No. 3, page 162, in their question and answer publication: "What is Purgatory? Purgatory is a state in which those suffer for time who die guilty of venial sins, or without having satisfied for the punishment due to their sins. The says that nothing defiled shall enter into Heaven (Apoc. 21, 27). Will those, who at death are not spotlessly holy have to go to Hell? Christ says no, because many will be forgiven in the next world (Matt. 12:32). There is, therefore, a place of cleansing in the next world, and this place we call Purgatory. Hell is only for those who die as enemies of God."

Many modern Catholics think of purgatory as a relic from the Dark Ages, which they would just as soon forget. Some Catholics even believe that purgatory is no longer a Roman Catholic doctrine. Despite such beliefs, however, purgatory is still an official dogma of the Roman Catholic Church and an essential part of the Roman Catholic plan of salvation. The Church affirmed the existence of purgatory at each of the last three ecumenical councils: Trent, Vatican I, and Vatican II. The latter council described purgatory as a place where the souls of the dead make expiation "in the next life through fire and torments or purifying punishments." According to Vatican II, "in purgatory the souls of those who died in the charity of God and truly repentant, but who had not made satisfaction with adequate penance for their sins and omissions are cleansed after death with punishments designed to purge away their debt." The Catechism of the Catholic Church describes purgatory as a place of "cleansing fire." Pope John Paul II in a message he delivered on June 2, 1998 entitled: "I Urge Catholics to Pray For the Dead," not only affirmed purgatory but, at the same time, rejects the sufficiency and necessity of Jesus Christ for salvation. Belief in the existence of purgatory is also expressed at every Mass. During the Liturgy of the Eucharist, prayers are offered for the dead. Usually the Mass itself is also offered for someone suffering in purgatory. The person's name is announced or published in the Sunday bulletin. Each year, in fact, on the anniversary of the death of the last pope, the present pope offers Mass for the souls of his two predecessors who are, presumably, still suffering in purgatory.

Purgatory was first defined as a dogma by the Council of Florence. Even though there were some indications of the idea of purgatory some 100 years after Christ, it wasn't until 1400 years after the time of Christ the doctrine was decreed an article of faith and over 1500 years after Christ the doctrine was officially confirmed. There is absolutely no way that the doctrine of purgatory can truthfully be traced back to the church of the New Testament. Jesus never taught it, the apostles never encouraged the people to believe in it, and no New Testament church ever encouraged people to pray for the dead to be removed from such a place. This doctrine, therefore, did not originate with Christ but with men and Jesus said, "But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matthew 15:9).

The basis of this doctrine of Purgatory is that something must be added to the sacrifice of Christ to give it more value or efficacy. The Catholic Church believes that Christ died for our sins; however, the blood of Christ cannot completely take away sins. Believers must still be punished for the sins they commit. Notice the admission of Cardinal Gibbons, "The Catholic Church teaches that, besides a place of eternal torments for the wicked and of everlasting rest for the righteous, there exists in the next life a middle state of temporary punishment, allotted for those who have died in venial sin, or who have not satisfied the justice of God for sins already forgiven." (The Faith of Our Fathers, p. 205).

Thus the blood of Christ does not satisfy God's justice, and the result is that one must suffer a period of time in purgatory until God's justice is satisfied or when the priest has determined the person has suffered enough—generally based upon how much money the family has paid. The Bible is very clear on this matter of the efficacy of the blood of Christ. The blood of Christ washes away our sins initially when we are baptized into Christ (Acts 22:16; Eph. 1:7). The blood of Christ also continues to wash away our sins as we confess our sins. John wrote, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). When those sins are washed away (cleansed) by the precious blood of Christ, they are totally forgiven and nothing else is needed, including the fires of purgatory. The Hebrew writer said, "And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin" (Heb. 10:17-18). But, if the Catholic doctrine of purgatory is right then it is another offering for sin, and it would be God continuing to remember our sins until we have passed through purgatory. This denies that the precious blood of Christ is sufficient to totally forgive sins.

Paul also wrote that, "Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him" (Rom. 5:9). When one is justified by the blood of Christ, he is saved from wrath. However, purgatory is wrath; and even though it is only temporary wrath to satisfy God's justice, it is still wrath. Either we are saved from wrath (as the Bible teaches) or we suffer wrath in purgatory (as Catholicism teaches).

As Paul was about to suffer death for preaching the word of God, he wrote to Timothy and said, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing" (2 Timothy 4:8). Notice the word "henceforth." This means from this time forth, Paul would receive a crown of life. It was not going to be after a period of time in purgatory. However, this crown of life was not going to be given just to Paul, but to all those who love the appearing of our Lord.

Dear reader, what will you believe? The Bible or Roman Catholicism?

Visit us online at: [montevista.church](http://montevista.church)  
or  
Stop by and worship with us!

**Monte Vista**  
**church of Christ**