

Question: “Are You Listening to the Right People?”

Explore...

Was Peter the First Pope, or Simply a Great Apostle?

Before answering this question we will dive into why the Catholic Church believes Peter was the first pope as well as the reason for such a veneration of the pope later in our study.

In his book Reasoning from the Scriptures with Catholics author Ron Rhodes give us the following insight:

Roman Catholics allege that St. Peter’s Basilica in Vatican City was built above Peter’s tomb. They believe Peter took up residence in Rome in A.D. 42 and remained there until his martyrdom in A.D. 67. Indeed, “his very primacy led Peter to settle in Rome, as the place from which the primacy that had its principle in him could best be exercised.”

Catholics claim Peter was the first bishop, or pope, of Rome. He allegedly ruled the universal church from that city, and, according to Catholics, whoever succeeds Peter as the bishop of Rome also succeeds him as pope. Catholic scholars realize that Scripture nowhere explicitly states that Peter went to Rome. But they argue that tradition on this point is unmistakable. As well, they believe that in the light of tradition, certain New Testament passages seem to confirm that Peter may have ended up in Rome.

The Roman Catholic reasoning behind why they believe Peter was the first pope are:

- Peter’s name appears first in various lists of the apostles.
- Peter was called the “rock” upon whom Jesus would build the church. (Matthew 16:18)
- Jesus gave Peter the “keys of the kingdom of heaven”. (Matthew 16:19)
- Jesus told Peter to “tend His sheep”, thus placing him in authority over the church. (John 21:15-17)
- Jesus prayed that Peter’s faith would not fail so the Catholic Church says this makes Peter, as well as successive popes, infallible.

Let's explore each of the five beliefs of the Roman Catholic Church regarding Peter being the first pope and see if they are consistent with Scripture.

1. Scripture teaches that Peter did not become the first pope and that he did not have any supreme position among the apostles.

Luke 22:24-30

It is noteworthy that in **Luke 22:24-30**, just prior to the time of Christ's arrest and crucifixion, some of the disciples got into an argument regarding who among them would be considered the greatest. One must wonder why the disciples would continue to even ask this question if the issue had been settled, with Peter having emerged as God's choice for some supreme position. The very fact that such discussions took place shows that no apostle had attained a supreme position during Jesus' three-year ministry. Jesus treated each of the disciples with an equal level of respect and trust. (Rhodes, Ron. Reasoning from the Scriptures with Catholics (pp. 90-91). Harvest House Publishers.)

Ask...

- If it had already been settled that Peter was the chief apostle why was there debate over who was the greatest in **Luke 22:24-30**?
- If Peter was the greatest why didn't Jesus did establish this? Why did He instead say that none of them were the greatest and in fact all of them were equal as servants on earth and equal as judges over Israel in the future?

Paul affirmed in **2 Corinthians 12:11** that he was not inferior to any of the other apostles. Paul would not have said this had a papacy been in existence. It is also highly revealing that while Peter is prominent in the first 12 chapters of the Book of Acts, the apostle Paul is the prominent figure in chapters 13–28. This would not make sense if Peter were the pope. Further, when Paul lists the authority structure in the early church in **1 Corinthians 12:28**, there is no mention of a pope: "And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers" (**1 Corinthians 12:28**). (Ibid., p. 91)

Further, in the Book of Acts we find a detailed history of the early church, and there is no mention or even a hint of the existence of a papacy. Nor is there the slightest hint of Petrine supremacy. Instead, we find verses that indicate that Peter was not in a supreme position. For example, we read that the apostles “sent” Peter and John to Samaria after they heard about God’s work in Samaria (**Acts 8:14**). (Peter would have done the sending had he been supreme.) As well, Peter certainly plays no supreme role in the Jerusalem Council (see **Acts 15:1-35**), for he is portrayed as one among a number of apostles. Instead, James seems to be the person of dominance there (see verses 13-35). (Ibid., p. 92)

2. The “rock” upon which the church would be built was Peter’s confession of faith in Christ, not Peter himself. (Matthew 16:18)

Matthew 16:18

The Roman Catholic Teaching:

Roman Catholic authorities often say this passage supports their view of papal infallibility. They say Peter is the rock upon which Christ built the church: His original name was Simon, but Jesus gave him the name “Peter,” which is Greek, or “Cephas,” which is the Aramaic equivalent. “Peter” and “Cephas” mean “the rock” (John 1:42). Such a name was appropriate to the strong character of the man, but the name became a supremely significant metaphor when Christ later made the dramatic assignment: “You are Peter and on this rock I will build my Church” (Matthew 16:18). There could be no question about the recognition of Peter’s leadership. (*Pocket Catholic Dictionary*, pp. 325-326)

The Biblical Teaching:

There are a number of factors in the Greek text that argue against this interpretation. First, whenever Peter is referred to in this passage (Matthew 16), it is in the second person (“you”), but “this rock” is in the third person (verse 18). Moreover, “Peter” (petros) is a masculine singular term, and “rock” (petra) is a feminine singular term. Hence, they do not have the same referent. Jesus did not say to Peter, “You are Petros and on this Petros I will build my church.” Jesus said, “You are Petros (Peter), and upon this petra, I will build my church.” It would seem

that, in context, *petra* here refers to Peter's confession of faith that Jesus is the Christ. (Rhodes, Ron. Reasoning from the Scriptures with Catholics (pp. 103-104). Harvest House Publishers.)

Ephesians 2:20 affirms that the church is *"built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone."* Two things are clear from this: First, all the apostles, not just Peter, are the foundation of the church; second, the only one who was given a place of uniqueness or prominence was Christ, the capstone. Indeed, Peter himself referred to Christ as "the cornerstone" of the church (**1 Peter 2:7**), and the rest of believers as "living stones" (verse 5) in the superstructure of the church. **Colossians 1:17,18** affirms that Christ alone is the head of the church. Christ is called a rock in **Romans 9:33** and in **1 Corinthians 10:4**. Both the immediate context of **Matthew 16:18** and the broader context of all of Scripture point away from Peter being "the rock." We must not forget, "No man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (**1 Corinthians 3:11**). (Ibid., p. 105)

3. The "keys of the kingdom" relate to the privilege Peter had of preaching the Gospel, not to Peter's supremacy.

Matthew 16:19

The Roman Catholic Teaching:

Roman Catholics believe this verse proves the primacy of Peter over the church, and by extension, proves the primacy of the pope (Peter's successor) over the church. Indeed, When [Peter] acknowledged Christ as the Son of God, our Lord declared that such knowledge was a revelation from God, and on account of his open confession of the truth, Christ promised to build His Church upon him, the Rock, and to entrust to him His entire household, namely, all His followers. This is the symbolism of the keys (**Matthew 16:18,19**).

The primacy of the pope, based on this verse, was declared at the First Vatican Council (1870): *Peter, the Prince and Chief of the Apostles, the pillar of faith and foundation of the Catholic Church, received the keys of the kingdom from our Lord Jesus Christ, the Savior and Redeemer of mankind, and lives, presides, and judges, to this day and always, in his successors the Bishops of the Holy See of Rome which was founded by him and consecrated by his blood. Whence,*

whoever succeeds to Peter in this See, does by the institution of Christ himself obtain the primacy of Peter over the whole Church. The Roman Pontiff possesses the primacy over the whole world, and that Roman Pontiff is the successor of Blessed Peter, Prince of the Apostles, and is true Vicar of Christ, and Head of the whole Church, and Father and Teacher of all Christians; and that full power was given to him in Blessed Peter to feed, rule, and govern the Universal Church by Jesus Christ our Lord. The Second Vatican Council likewise stated: "The Lord made Peter alone the rock-foundation and the holder of the keys of the Church (cf. Matthew 16:18,19), and constituted him shepherd of his whole flock (cf. John 21:15 ff.)." Ludwig Ott, Roman Catholic theologian, says that the keys to which Jesus refers represent "supreme authority on earth over the earthly empire of God. The person who possesses the power of the keys has the full power of allowing a person to enter the empire of God or to exclude him from it [and]...the power to forgive sins must also be included in the power of the keys." This power was allegedly given to Peter and lives on in each of Peter's successors (the popes).

The Biblical Teaching:

The context of this verse relates to witnessing and evangelism by the apostles. All this verse is saying is that the apostles were given the power to grant or deny access into the kingdom of God based on how people respond to the gospel message. Those who respond favorably to the gospel are "granted" access, while those who choose not to believe the gospel and refuse to believe in Jesus are "denied" access to the kingdom of God. (Rhodes, Ron. Reasoning from the Scriptures with Catholics (p. 109). Harvest House Publishers.)

We must keep in mind that the terms bind and loose were Jewish idioms indicating that what is announced on earth has already been determined in heaven. To bind meant to forbid, refuse, or prohibit; to loose meant to permit or allow. We can announce the prohibition or allowance of certain things on earth because heaven (or God) has already made an announcement on these matters. The Greek construction of the latter half of Matthew 16:19 makes this clear, for there we have two perfect passive participles in periphrastic construction. (The perfect tense indicates an action that was completed in the past but has continuing results.) The proper translation is, "Whatsoever you bind upon earth shall have already been bound in heaven, and

whatsoever you loose upon the earth shall have already been loosed in heaven.” Hence, again, Christians can announce the prohibition or allowance of certain things on earth because heaven has already made an announcement on these matters. (Ibid., p. 109)

In the same way, binding in the context of **Matthew 16:19** refers to prohibiting entry into God’s kingdom to those who reject the apostolic witness of Jesus Christ. Loosing refers to granting entry into God’s kingdom among those who accept that witness (see John 20:23; Acts 2:38-41). The apostles could prohibit entry (bind) or grant entry (loose) into God’s kingdom only because heaven has already declared that entry into the kingdom hinged on accepting the apostolic witness regarding Jesus Christ.

As we read through the Book of Acts, it is clear that Peter and the apostles did indeed “grant access” into the kingdom of God to various people. Indeed, there were Jews (**Acts 2:14-36**), Samaritans (8:4-25), and Gentiles (9:32–10:48) who were granted access to the kingdom of God based on their positive response to the gospel. What we do not see in the Book of Acts is Peter rising to a position of supremacy and exercising authority over all others. The history recorded in the Book of Acts completely stands against the Roman Catholic interpretation. (Ibid., p. 110)

4. Jesus telling Peter to “tend His sheep” was not elevating him over the other apostles but to bring him back up to their level after Peter’s three-fold denial of Jesus.

John 21:15-17

The Roman Catholic Teaching:

Roman Catholic theologians often argue that Christ’s instruction to Peter to “tend My lambs” and “shepherd My sheep” proves that Jesus was putting Peter in a position of authority over the church. Indeed, the word shepherd is particularly a term of authority. We read in the Manual of Dogmatic Theology: “Since this authority is given only to Peter, then Peter holds the true primacy through which he performs the offices of the supreme pastor of Christ’s church.” (A. Tanquerey, *A Manual of Dogmatic Theology*, vol. 1, p. 120)

The Biblical Teaching:

We do not find any hint in this passage that Jesus was elevating Peter to a position of supremacy. Rather, Jesus exacts a threefold confession of love from Peter to make up for his threefold denial of Christ. The Lord is simply restoring a fallen apostle. Christ was seeking Peter's restoration. The only reason Peter was singled out here is that he is the single apostle that denied Christ. Jesus was not exalting Peter above the other apostles here, but bringing him up to their level! (Rhodes, Ron. Reasoning from the Scriptures with Catholics (p. 116). Harvest House Publishers.)

5. Jesus's prayer that Peter's faith would not fail was a part of his restoration after his threefold denial of Jesus.

Luke 22:31-32

The Roman Catholic Teaching:

Roman Catholic theologians believe that this prayer by Christ ensures the infallibility of Peter and his successors in protecting the faith. We read in Denzinger's The Sources of Catholic Dogma: "St. Peter always remains unimpaired by any error, according to the divine promise of our Lord the Savior made to the chief of his disciples: 'I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.'"

The Biblical Teaching:

This verse has nothing to do with papal infallibility. Indeed, Christ's words relate only to the one issue of Peter's denial of Christ (**Luke 22:34**). There is nothing in the verse to even remotely suggest that Christ was making some veiled promise relating to the infallibility of Peter. All we have here is the Lord Jesus praying for Peter's restoration after his impending fall. Jesus prayed that Peter's faith would not fail following his dismal failure as a disciple. Jesus' prayer for Peter is in keeping with His general intercessory ministry for all believers (**Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25; see also John 17:15**). (Rhodes, Ron. Reasoning from the Scriptures with Catholics (p. 115). Harvest House Publishers.)

Explore...

Are the Pope, the Bishops, and the Magisterium Infallible?

In short, the answer is “no.” Consider first what Scripture says in regard to taking anything any teacher says at face value and without examination as stated by scholar Ron Rhodes...

In claiming to be infallible when speaking on matters of faith and morals, the pope claims for himself something that even the apostles did not. The apostle Paul is an example. In the Book of Galatians, Paul warned against the danger of a false gospel and said, “But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed” (**Galatians 1:8**). The gospel that Paul preached is permanently recorded in written form in his Epistles. And if anything conflicts with that written Scripture, it is to be rejected. Scripture alone is infallible and hence authoritative (**John 10:35**).

When in **Acts 17:11** the Bereans tested Paul’s truth claims against the Old Testament Scriptures, Paul did not chasten them but rather commended them. Paul’s attitude is encapsulated in this admonition: “Examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good” (**1 Thessalonians 5:21**). We should follow this advice in regard to the truth claims of the pope. His teachings should be measured against the teachings of Scripture. And in doing so it becomes clear, at least in many cases, that the pope’s teaching is patently unbiblical.

Just a couple of examples in regard to the fallibility of the pope include the pope of 1632 teaching that the earth was the center of the solar system which was debunked by Galileo and Pope Honorius I (A.D. 625–638), who was soundly condemned by the Sixth General Council for teaching the monothelite heresy (the teaching that there was only one will in Christ). How can an infallible pope teach fallible heresy? It does not make sense.

Are the Popes a Part of Apostolic Succession?

Related to this whole issue of alleged apostolic succession is the important scriptural fact that the apostles were totally unique, and they did not pass on anything to a line of successors. The uniqueness of the apostles is seen in the unique miraculous powers they possessed. The apostles were handpicked by God and were given special, unmistakable “signs of an apostle”

(2 Corinthians 12:12). These sign gifts included the ability to raise people from the dead on command (**Matthew 10:8**), heal incurable diseases (Matthew 10:8; John 9:1-7), and perform immediate exorcisms (**Matthew 10:8; Acts 16:16-18**). On one occasion an apostle pronounced a supernatural death sentence on two people who had “lied to the Holy Spirit,” and they immediately dropped over dead (**Acts 5:1-11**).

Significantly, these miraculous powers ceased during the lives of the apostles. We read in **Hebrews 2:3,4**, “After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us [apostles] by those who heard, God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will” (insert added).

While the apostles and their miraculous confirmations have passed away, their authoritative teachings remain in authority in the pages of holy Scripture. “The authority of apostolic writings has replaced the authority of the first-century apostolic writers.”

Related to this, we read in Jude 3: “Contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.” In the Greek text, the definite article (the) preceding faith points to the one and only faith; there is no other. “The faith” refers to the apostolic body of truth that became regulative upon the church (see **Acts 6:7; Galatians 1:23; 1 Timothy 4:1**). Bauer, Arndt, and Gingrich, in their highly regarded Greek Lexicon, tell us that faith in this verse refers to “that which is believed, a body of faith or belief, a doctrine.” This “faith” or body of doctrine was once for all handed down to the saints by the unique apostles of God, and their message was confirmed by mighty miracles.

The word translated “once for all” (Greek: *apax*) refers to something that has been done for all time, something that never needs repeating. The revelatory process was finished after this “faith” had “once for all” been delivered by the apostles. Note also that the word delivered (an aorist passive participle) here indicates an act that was completed in the past with no continuing element.

Scripture indicates that the church is built on the foundation of the prophets and apostles (**Ephesians 2:20**). Of course, once a foundation is built, no further foundation is needed. And because no further foundation is needed, there is no need for apostolic successors. The Bible clearly teaches that apostles and prophets were foundational gifts, and there is not a shred of biblical proof that there were to be successors to the apostles in the Roman Catholic Church. (Rhodes, Ron. Reasoning from the Scriptures with Catholics, pp. 97-99).

Explore...

Was Mary Something More Than the Mother of Jesus?

According to Roman Catholic theology the following is said to be true of Mary:

- Mary was greater than any human that's ever lived and was therefore picked to be a part of God's salvation plan.
- She herself was immaculately conceived and therefore was preserved from original sin.
- Mary remained a virgin and never had sexual relations with Joseph. They say that Scripture speaking of his brothers is actually a reference to them being His cousins.
- Mary is the Mother of God. This term is a "title of the blessed Virgin Mary as the physical parent of Jesus, who is God."
- Mary is the co-redeemer of humanity along with Jesus.
- Mary was bodily assumed into heaven after her earthly life was over.
- Mary is venerated by the Catholic Church worldwide.

We must now ask whether these seven claims made the Roman Catholic Church are true according to Scripture or whether Mary has been made into an idol in the Catholic Church.

Just a quick note...

While the Roman Catholic Church will say that they do not worship Mary as they do God the Father, they do give adoration that is above that of the apostles as well as angels. So, is this adoration of Mary warranted and is it biblical? We will look at seven reasons why the answer is "no".

1. Mary was a humble servant of God and nothing more.

In Roman Catholicism Mary is the female counterpart to Jesus. Just as Jesus was born without sin the Catholic Church says Mary lived a sinless life. They also teach that Jesus ascended into heaven after His resurrection and Mary was assumed into heaven after she died and though Jesus is King, Mary is the Queen of Heaven. None of these ideas are found anywhere in Scripture.

The biblical Mary admits herself that she needs a Savior (**Luke 1:47**) and that she was nothing more than a humble servant of the Lord (**Luke 1:48**).

2. Mary was not immaculately conceived and had a sin nature.

Mary herself knew she had a sin nature and was in need of a Savior (**Luke 1:47**). She proved this through her offering to the Jewish priest in **Luke 2:22-24**, something she wouldn't have had to do unless she had sinned. Scripture also tells us that **all** people have sinned and that "all" includes Mary herself.

Ask...

- Would you please read **Romans 3:10, 23, and 5:12**?
- Wouldn't "all" include Mary since there is no exception clause found here?

3. Mary did not remain a virgin her entire life.

In **Matthew 1:25** we read that Mary remained a virgin *until* she gave birth to a son. We then read in **Matthew 13:55-56** that Mary had other sons who were the brothers of Jesus (James, Joseph, Simon and Judas).

In addition to the above passages we even read in the Old Testament Messianic psalm that Jesus would be estranged from His *brothers* (**Psalms 69:8**).

4. Mary was only the “mother of God” in a very narrowly defined sense.

Since Mary did not play any part in the divinity of Jesus but was simply the human vessel through which God the Son was born and through whom the incarnation took place, there is nothing in that event that gives rise to the exaltation of Mary.

5. Mary is in no way the co-redeemer or mediatrix of humanity alongside Christ.

Scripture makes it clear that there is only one mediator between God and man and that is Jesus (**1 Timothy 2:5**). When Jesus, the mediator, died on the cross it was not Mary who offered Him to the Father (as Catholics) claim, but it was Jesus “who offered Himself without blemish to God” (**Hebrews 9:14**).

As well, God tells us in His Word that He alone is the Savior and there is no other (**Isaiah 43:11**). It is also because of Jesus’s unique qualification as the Redeemer that Mary is disqualified from any role as a co-redeemer. Jesus stated clearly in **John 14:6** that no one could come to the Father except through Him, there’s no mention of Mary or any other co-redeemer. **Acts 4:12** is one other verse among many that tell us that it is only through Jesus that salvation is found and there is no other.

6. Mary was not bodily assumed into heaven when her life was over.

The doctrine of Mary being bodily assumed into heaven didn’t even become Catholic doctrine until the mid-twentieth century and even Catholic theologians admit there isn’t a shred of biblical evidence for this doctrine. It is manmade and to be rejected as Jesus alone is the only one who ascended bodily into heaven after He died as was then raised again.

7. Mary should not be venerated since no person should ever be venerated as veneration belongs to God alone.

As we read about what Jesus said and taught in the gospels we read nothing about the exaltation or veneration of Mary. In fact, virtually nothing is said about Mary from the lips of Jesus all throughout Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. In the epistles, when the apostles were giving instruction to the church we don’t find anything about the exaltation or veneration of Mary. This is another manmade doctrine that is offensive to God.

Question: “Are You Going to End Up in the Right Destination?”

Explore...

Is Purgatory a Real Place and Is It Needed?

Purgatory may be defined as “a place or state in which are detained the souls of those who die in grace, in friendship with God, but with the blemish of venial sin or with temporal debt for sin unpaid. Here the soul is purged, cleansed, readied for eternal union with God in Heaven.”

(*Catholicism*, George Brantl, p. 291) The Catechism of the Catholic Church tells us that “all who die in God’s grace and friendship, 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.” The *Pocket Catholic Dictionary* tells us “the purpose of purgatory is to cleanse one of imperfections, venial sins, and faults, and to remit or do away with the temporal punishment due to mortal sins that have been forgiven in the Sacrament of Penance”.

Catholics believe that if you have loved ones in purgatory there are things you can do to shorten their stay there such as repetitive prayers, giving alms, and other good works.

Closely related to the doctrine of purgatory is the false teaching of indulgences. The Roman Catholic Church teaches that the church is the steward of a reservoir of merit called the “Treasury of Merit”. The Roman Catholic Church can supposedly dispense from this reservoir and cancel the debt of temporal punishment.

With that brief introduction to the Roman Catholic doctrine of purgatory and indulgences we can list the overall Roman Catholic view of purgatory and craft a biblical response:

- Purgatory is a place where the soul is purged from sin.
- People spend varying amounts of time in purgatory depending on how much purging of sin they need to do.

- A person can shorten a loved one's stay in purgatory through prayers, alms, and various good works.
- There is a Treasury of Merit that the Catholic Church can dispense to faithful Catholics.
- The church can dispense these "indulgences" from this treasury to shorten one's stay in purgatory.

What does Scripture have to say in regard to these dogmas? There are seven things we will explore here in regard to the doctrine of purgatory and indulgences.

1. Purgatory contradicts the good news of the Gospel of Jesus since His death on the cross is said to completely cancel our record of debt accrued by our sin.

Jesus either canceled our record of debt completely or He did not. His death on the cross was either completely sufficient pay the penalty for our sin or it was not. By saying that one must go to purgatory to purge oneself from their sin is to say the latter, that Jesus's death was not sufficient to pay for our sin and that is an affront to Jesus.

Ask...

- Would you please read **Romans 3:23-26**?
- How is one justified and redeemed?
- Please read **Colossians 2:13-15**.
- How many of our trespasses are forgiven by Christ?
- If our record of debt has been cancelled what is there left to be purged of?
- Can you see how the doctrine of purgatory is an assault on the cross work of Christ?

2. Purgatory came about because of the Roman Catholic Church's weak view of justification.

Since Roman Catholics don't view a person as once-for-all righteous in God's sight once trusting in Jesus as their Lord and Savior they believe there is a need for purgatory so as to perfect oneself.

However, the biblical doctrine of justification (being declared righteous by God) is a singular and instantaneous event that completely pays for and takes away the sin of the one declared justified (**Romans 3:21-28**).

3. Jesus's work on the cross makes purgatory unnecessary.

When Jesus cried out from the cross "It is finished" (**John 19:30**) He cried out one Greek word, *tetelestai*, which was a word used to declare one's debt as fully paid with not a cent left to be repaid. There is no need for purgatory when one has trusted in Jesus's redemption (payment) on the cross which paid the full penalty for all their sins, past, present, and future.

We are therefore cleansed by the blood of Jesus and not by the "fires of purgatory" (**Heb. 9:14**). It is only through Christ's work on the cross that we are made righteous (**2 Corinthians 5:21**) and therefore, another reason there is no need for purgatory. In fact, what Jesus accomplished on our behalf and the great cost to Him to go to the cross makes the doctrine of purgatory not only unnecessary, but offensive to Christ.

4. There is one destiny for followers of Jesus and that is heaven.

In both **Philippians 1:23** and **2 Corinthians 5:6-8** the Apostle Paul makes clear that the moment we physically die we will experience intimate fellowship with Jesus because Jesus Himself paved the way for us to be with Him. After reading such verses it becomes clear that there is no stop-off place such as purgatory.

Ask...

- Would you please read **Philippians 1:23** and **2 Corinthians 5:6-8**?
- How can these verses from the Apostle Paul possibly be reconciled with the Roman Catholic doctrine of purgatory?

5. The Roman Catholic doctrine of indulgences is incompatible with grace.

Remember that the doctrine of indulgences involves loved ones doing good works to earn indulgences from the Catholic Church who is the dispenser of these indulgences which can then be used to shorten one's time in purgatory.

This completely denigrates what Christ did on the cross and screams that He did not accomplish full redemption on our behalf, which is anathema (that which is eternally accursed). However, Scripture speaks loudly and often to the fact that Christ paid the full payment for our redemption with nothing left to be earned.

Ask...

- Would you please read **2 Corinthians 5:19-21, Colossians 2:13, Romans 3:20-30, and Hebrews 10:10-14?**
- How could one possibly reconcile these verses speaking of God's grace given to all followers of Jesus that have their sins completely forgiven with the Roman Catholic doctrine of purgatory and indulgences?
- Can you see how these are manmade doctrines that bring great offense to Christ and denigrate what He has done on the cross?

6. The Bible verses cited by the Roman Catholic Church to supposedly prove the doctrines of purgatory and indulgences are misinterpreted.

The most common verses cited by the Catholic Church to supposedly prove the doctrines of purgatory and indulgences include **1 Corinthians 3:10-15, Matthew 5:26, and 2 Cor. 12:15.**

1 Corinthians 3:10-15

The context of this passage is all about the rewards one will gain or lose when they stand before the judgment seat of Christ as a believer. This has nothing to do with purging a person of sin, but everything to do with testing the believer's works to determine which rewards they will gain and which they will lose.

Matthew 5:26

In reading the greater context of **Matthew 5:21-26** it becomes clear that Jesus is talking about an earthly prison and the practical teaching is about the reconciliation of human conflicts. Any idea of a spiritual prison or the doctrine of purgatory is totally foreign to the text.

2 Corinthians 12:15

Context once again matters greatly here. All the Apostle Paul was saying was that he had a desire to “spend and be expended” for the sake of living believers in Corinth. Paul was willing to give his money as well as himself for these living in believers in Corinth if it meant them becoming more like Jesus. There is no support whatsoever for the doctrine of purgatory or indulgences to be found here.

7. The doctrine of purgatory is connected to the occult.

Throughout the history of the Roman Catholic Church there have been widespread reports of visions of dead persons appearing to them. An example we could cite comes from *The Dogma of Purgatory* which has the Catholic seal of approval, meaning it is said to be “free of doctrinal and moral error.” This book is full of stories of alleged spirits of dead Catholics appearing to faithful living Catholics warning them of the torments of purgatory.

This is what the Bible calls necromancy and spiritism and is completely condemned by Scripture (**Deuteronomy 18:10-12**).

Conclusion:

It is clear from comparing Scripture to the teachings of the Catholic Church that the Catholic Church is a false religion leading its followers to hell through a works based view of salvation, an allegorized view of Scripture, denigrating Christ’s work on the cross, setting up a hierarchy of popes, bishops, cardinals, and priests that are found nowhere in Scripture, and teaching doctrines such as that of purgatory and indulgences that take away from the cross work of Christ and the grace of God. Catholics need to be introduced to the true Jesus of Scripture and the grace that is offered freely to them apart from works. Below is that introduction.

The Gospel: God's Good News for Mankind

God Desires a Personal Relationship with Human Beings

God created human beings (Genesis 1:27) and He did not create them to exist alone apart from Him. He created us to be in fellowship with Him (1 John 1:5-7) just as He originally created Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:8-19).

The problem is...

We Have a Sin Problem

When Adam and Eve chose to sin against God in the Garden of Eden, they catapulted the entire human race into sin.

The Apostle Paul affirmed that "sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin" (Romans 5:12). Contrary to the Mormon minimalization of sin as a "mistake," Jesus often spoke of sin in metaphors that illustrate the tremendous havoc sin can reap in one's life. He described sin as blindness (Matthew 23:16-26), sickness (Matthew 9:12), being enslaved (John 8:34), and living in darkness (John 8:12; 12:35-46). Jesus also taught that this is a universal condition and that all people are guilty before God (Luke 7:37-48).

Of course, some people are more morally upright than others. But even if we seek to do good works every day, we all fall short of God's glory (Romans 3:23). In a contest to throw a rock to the moon, a more muscular athlete would be able to throw the rock further, but all would fall woefully short of throwing the rock to the moon. Similarly, all of us fall short of measuring up to God's perfect standard.

The good news is that...

Jesus Made Salvation Possible

God's absolute holiness demands that sin be punished. The good news of the Gospel, however, is that Jesus has taken that punishment upon Himself. That is how much God loves us!

Jesus Himself affirmed that His very purpose for coming into the world was to die for our sins (John 12:27). Moreover, He perceived His death as being a sacrificial offering *for the sins of all humanity* (Matthew 26:26-28). (This is contrary to the Mormon teaching that Jesus covered

only Adam's transgression.) Because of what Jesus accomplished on the cross for us, we have a complete and wonderful redemption (not just resurrection).

God requires us to...

Believe In Jesus Christ (John 3:16-18; John 11:25)

God then provides for us...

Freedom From Sin and the Forgiveness of Sins (Ephesians 1:7; Hebrews 10:17; Psalm 32:1-2)

Complete assurance of the freedom from sin, forgiveness of sins, and eternal life with God forever in heaven is provided by simply believing in Jesus' finished work on the cross and His resurrection from the dead.

While it is not a prayer that saves you, but one's faith in Christ, you can pray something like this if you have chosen to place your trust in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ who is God in flesh and the only One worthy of paying our penalty...

Dear Jesus,

I want to have a relationship with you.

I know that I can't save myself because I am a sinner.

Thank you for dying on the cross on my behalf.

I believe you died for me. I accept your free gift of salvation.

Thank you, Jesus!

Amen!