

The New Heaven and the New Earth, part 1

1. Christians should **train their minds** to focus on God's final plan.

1.1. **Colossians 3:1-4**: “If then you were raised with Christ, **seek** those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. 3 For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.”

1.1.1. ζητέω: (seek) to attempt to learn something by careful investigation or searching—‘to try to learn, to search, to try to find out, to seek information.’¹

1.1.2. The implication is that naturally Christians do *not* seek things above.

1.2. **Hebrews 11:13-16**: “These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. 14 For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. 15 And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 But now they **desire a better, that is, a heavenly country**. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.”

1.2.1. “If you read history, you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were just those who **thought most of the next**,” C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, p. 118.

2. What **you do today matters forever**.

- Our eternal destination is the consequence of what we ***believe*** on earth.
- Our eternal compensation is the consequence of how we ***behave*** on earth.

--Dr. Bruce Wilkinson

¹Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996, c1989). *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament : Based on semantic domains* (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition.) (1:329). New York: United Bible societies.

- 2.1. What you believe determines where you will spend eternity.
- 2.2. What you do (on earth) determines how you will spend your eternity.
 - 2.2.1. Matthew 11:20-24; Luke 12:47 seem to indicate there are degrees in hell.
 - 2.2.2. Rewards seem to indicate differences in how people experience heaven.
- 2.3. In Matthew 5:12 and Luke 6:23 Jesus says how we handle persecution determines the degree of reward.
- 2.4. In Matthew 16:27 Jesus says he will be rewarded according to his works.
- 2.5. In Luke 12:14 Jesus says people will be “repaid” at His return.
- 2.6. 1 Corinthians 3:5-17 gives great detail regarding the subject of Christian reward.
3. The concept of purgatory is not convincing.
 - 3.1. The meaning of the word:
 - 3.1.1. 1175–1225; (n.) ME purgatorie ML pūrgātōrium, n. LL pūrgātōrius, **purg**ing, equiv. to pūrgā(re) **to purge** + tōrius (a suffix occurring in loanwords from Latin, usually derivatives from agent nouns ending in -tor or directly from verbs, denoting a place or object appropriate for the activity of the verb). <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/purgatory>
 - 3.2. The history of the teaching:
 - 3.2.1. The term “purgatory” denotes the place and process of purging from the stains of postbaptismal sin and suffering its remaining temporal penalties, occurring in the intermediate state between death and resurrection . . . The idea of purgatory emerged from reflection on the immemorial Christian custom of praying for the dead and particularly of offering the Eucharist on behalf of the dead, especially on anniversaries of their deaths. This pious practice inevitably gave rise to the question: If the dead are already either in heaven and therefore no longer in need of prayers or doomed to hell and so beyond the reach of prayers, why do we pray for them? Prayers for the dead gave rise to the idea, already present in late Jewish piety, that there must be some intermediate but temporary state between heaven and hell, a state that eventually assumed the name “purgatory.”²

² Fahlbusch, E., & Bromiley, G. W. (2005). *Vol. 4: The encyclopedia of Christianity* (454). Grand Rapids, Mich.; Leiden, Netherlands: Wm. B. Eerdmans; Brill.

3.2.2. From the idea of praying for the dead came the concern about postbaptismal sins: sins committed after one's baptism.

3.2.2.1. The practice of infant baptism only accentuated the concern over sin. Baptism, it was believed, could provide pardon by God and cleansing from sin but this held no value for sins committed following baptism, which were many subsequent to infancy.

3.2.2.1.1. Even though baptism prepared one for heaven, it did not remove the “all the temporal consequences or stains of sin. . . . As a result, penitent offenders might be sure of heaven but not yet fit for it, further cleansing and penalties being needed before they could enter into the fullness of salvation. . . . With the passing of the age of persecutions and with it the prospect of certain salvation through martyrdom, it seemed obvious that most people died neither so totally good that they were prepared for heaven nor so completely evil that they deserved hell.”³

3.2.2.1.2. As a result, the church developed a “temporary” means of paying for sins penalty without eternal consequences.

3.2.3. The early church developed a biblical basis to support the need for purging or, as it became known, purgatory.

3.2.3.1. A biblical basis for purgatory was found in passages like 2 Macc. 12:39–45, Matthew 12:31–37, and 1 Corinthians 3:11–15.

3.2.3.2. [The context is one of battle and those slain, dying with secret sins; Judas Maccabeus offer prayers and sacrifices on behalf of the dead so that they might have a share in heaven]

2 Maccabeus. 12:39–45

³⁹Next day, when the troops of Judas went—as it was high time they did—to pick up the corpses of the slain, in order to bring them home to lie with their kinsfolk in their fathers' sepulchres, ⁴⁰they discovered under the shirts of every one of the dead men amulets [an object worn, especially around the neck, as a charm against evil or injury] of the idols of Jamnia—a practice forbidden the Jews by law. All saw at once that this was why they had perished, ⁴¹and, blessing the (dealings) of the Lord, the just Judge who revealeth what is secret, ⁴²all betook themselves to supplication, beseeching that the **sin committed might be wholly blotted out**; and the noble-hearted Judas exhorted the people to keep themselves from sin, after what they had seen with their own eyes as the result of sin committed by those who had fallen. ⁴³He then collected from them, man by man, the sum of two thousand drachmas of silver, which he forwarded to Jerusalem **for a sin-offering**. In this he acted quite rightly and properly, ⁴⁴bearing in mind the resurrection—**for if he had not expected the fallen to rise again, ⁴⁵it would have been superfluous and silly to pray for the dead—and having regard to the splendour of the gracious reward which is reserved for those who have fallen asleep in godliness—a holy and pious consideration!** Hence he made propitiation for the dead, that they might be released from their sin.⁴

3.2.3.3. Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150–ca. 215; was a Christian theologian and the head of the noted Catechetical School of Alexandria). . . , Augustine (354–430; A Latin church father,

³ Fahlbusch, E., & Bromiley, G. W. (2005). *Vol. 4: The encyclopedia of Christianity*.

⁴ *Apocrypha of the Old Testament*. 2004 (R. H. Charles, Ed.). Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

is one of the most important figures in the development of Western Christianity) and Gregory the Great (590–604 was pope from 3 September 590 until his death), [helped develop] the doctrine of purgatory.⁵

- 3.3. **Greg's assessment of the primary differences** between Catholicism and Protestant regarding purgatory.
- 3.3.1. Purgatory holds that justification by faith is insufficient for completeness with God. Protestantism contests that justification is fully sufficient for salvation.
 - 3.3.2. Purgatory holds that sanctification, most cases, requires more than someone's physical life to complete. Protestantism limits sanctification to this life only.
 - 3.3.3. Purgatory places humans works as essential for being declared righteous. Protestantism disallows any form of works for a right relationship with God. People are saved by grace alone.
 - 3.3.4. Purgatory claims the Bible and extrabiblical readings support the doctrine of purgatory. Protestantism finds no biblical or extrabiblical support for the doctrine of purgatory.
 - 3.3.5. Purgatory supports opportunities for change subsequent to death. Protestantism claims "it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment," Hebrews 9:27.
 - 3.3.6. Purgatory classifies Christians into two camps: Saints and rank- and-file believers. Saints go directly to heaven and rank-and-file believers pass through purgatory. Protestantism makes no such distinction but instead classifies people as either saved or unsaved.

⁵ Fahlbusch, E., & Bromiley, G. W. (2005). *Vol. 4: The encyclopedia of Christianity*.