



## Brown Community Group Discussion Guide

“Death, Glorification, Unification: What happens to our Body, Soul and Spirit?”

Lesson 4 – What Happens When People Die?

March 5, 2017

### I. Lesson Starters:

What happens to our soul the instant we die, where does it go? What scriptures support your belief? Does our soul have some sort of holding place like purgatory or soul sleep after we die? What are these places supposed to be and what purpose do they serve? Do you know what the Doctrine of Soul Sleep and purgatory are based on?

### II. The Souls of Believers

Death is a temporary cessation of bodily life and a separation of the soul from the body, but where does the soul go when it departs?

#### 2 Corinthians 5:1-9

*1 For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. 2 Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling, 3 because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. 4 For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. 5 Now the one who has fashioned us for this very purpose is God, who has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come. 6 Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. 7 For we live by faith, not by sight. 8 We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. 9 So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it.*

#### Luke 23:39-43

*39 One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: “Aren’t you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!”<sup>40</sup> But the other criminal rebuked him. “Don’t you fear God,” he said, “since you are under the same sentence?”<sup>41</sup> We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.”<sup>42</sup> Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”<sup>43</sup> Jesus answered him, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.”*

#### Philippians 1:21-24

*21 For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. 22 If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! 23 I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; 24 but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body.*

Once a believer has died, while their physical body remains on earth, at the moment of death, the soul/spirit of that believer goes immediately into the presence of God with rejoicing.

#### Hebrews 12:22-24

*22 But you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, 23 to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the Judge of all, to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, 24 to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.*

We will see later in our series, how our Soul/Spirit is reunited with our bodies in a resurrected form at the time of Christ's return to earth.

### III. **The Bible Does Not Teach the Doctrine of Purgatory**

**Purgatory** is said to be the place in Roman Catholic doctrine where souls of the believers go to be further purified from sin until they are ready to be admitted into heaven.

Catholic Purgatory Definition (*noun*):

- In Roman Catholic doctrine, a place or state of suffering inhabited by the souls of sinners who are atoning for their sins before going to heaven; cleansing or purifying.
- mental anguish or suffering.
- "this was purgatory, worse than anything she'd faced in her life"
- Synonym of torment, torture, suffering, affliction, anguish, woe

The sufferings of purgatory are given to God in substitution for the punishment for sins that believers should have received in time, but did not. From the **Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma, Ludwig Ott, Page 322:**

*"Suffrages operate in such a manner that the satisfactory value of the good works is offered to God in substitution for the temporal punishment for sins which the poor souls still have to render. It operates by way of remission of temporal punishments due to sins"*

This doctrine is not taught in scriptures and is in fact directly contrary to the scriptures we just studied. The Catholic Church finds support not from scripture, but in writings of the Apocrypha, 2 Maccabees 12:42-45. In these writings, prayer for the sins of the dead are approved so that they might be delivered from their sin. Other scriptures they may use are 2 Timothy 1:18, Matthew 5:26 & 12:32 and 1 Corinthians 3:15.

The Apocrypha is not equal to scripture in authority and should not be taken as an authoritative source of doctrine. Moreover, it clearly contradicts the clear statements about death from Jesus's own comments and other New Testament scriptures.

- Non-Catholics would say that any scripture references above refers to the final judgement and have nothing to do with supporting a doctrine of purgatory.
- Additional scripture references refer to the punishment and deliverance from distress in this life, or of eternal life in Heaven

The **most serious doctrinal problem** with the **Doctrine of Purgatory** is that it **teaches that we must add something to the redemptive work of Christ**, and that his death and resurrection were not enough to forgive our sins!

- Contrary to the teaching of all scripture
- Robs believers of the great comfort that is theirs upon death to be in eternal heaven with their God

### IV. **Group Questions:**

1. Do you know if people who have had a "near death" experience either positive or negative that would support the scriptures references of the "soul/spirit" departing the body at death? Can you share?
2. Have you talked about Purgatory or Soul Sleep with other Christians who believe these doctrines?
3. Discuss why believing in anything additional to Christ's death, such as Purgatory is so dangerous to our doctrinal beliefs?
4. The scripture teaches us that we can do nothing to approach God and good works get us nowhere, so how can the doctrine of Purgatory "cure anything" to get us to heaven?