

Early Church Fathers and Jewish Teaching on Purgatory 2 of 3

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Going back further into the Jewish traditions:

“When one Jew approaches another and tells of the pain he is suffering, the other Jew feels it just as he does. Now they are both in need of prayer. The Jew does not feel he is praying for an “other” —he is praying for himself.”

Well, that's kind of an interesting take...

"In other words, all Jews can be considered as one body. If the toe is hurting, it needs the head and the heart to help it. So too, if I am in need, I can call upon other Jews—and especially those who are the head and the heart of our people—to pray for me, as well. Because if one Jew is hurting, we are all hurting."

And...isn't this what the Lord taught? It's beautiful. The Lord taught this very thing, that we are one Body.

"Rabbi Shik then extends this to the deceased, as well. According to the Talmud and the Zohar, those righteous souls who have passed on from this world are still very much in touch with their students and family, and care for them and their problems. We petition them to pray on our behalf—and they do, and often their prayers are more effective than our own. After all, we often don't fathom the seriousness of these problems from our limited perspective as much as they might from their much more lofty view."

Heaven is SO pure. Paradise is so pure. The things you didn't consider on Earth as being sinful, I'm sure you see them very clearly there as being sinful.

"Praying at a grave site does not mean you are beseeching this dead person to rise from the grave and appear before you. That is the abomination to which the above-cited verse refers. Neither are you, G-d forbid, praying to the dead—a practice that is most certainly forbidden. (Now, these are the Jews.) But you are able to connect with these souls, since, when it comes to the soul, all of us are truly one."

You know, that's a little bit conflicting. They can pray for you, but you can't pray for them. That doesn't make sense. So, they're saying here that we're all on Body. It doesn't make any sense that we can't pray for each other. And prayer is only petition. It's only asking. So, it's a little bit confusing that people would think that during communication - the whole Body's in communication. And they can help us, but we can't help them. Or we can help them, but they can't help us. That makes no sense at all.

This article on Judaism goes on to say, "You are simply expressing your faith that the righteous never really die, truth is never truly lost and even the grave cannot prevent you from connecting to this great teacher and righteous soul. Just as this tzaddik cared and took care of others during his lifetime— (apparently that means 'teacher'. A great Teacher.) not as "others" but as he cared for his own soul—so too now, nothing has changed and he still can feel your pain and pray with you."

Okay... This article really does have a few contradictions!

"The Zohar states this as well, when it tells us that the righteous teacher is here with us after his passing even more than before."

Oh, I really believe that.

"During his lifetime, the righteous one was limited within a physical body. Now he has transcended those limitations. But he never transcends his sympathy for the plight of another soul—no matter where that soul may be found. Just as during his lifetime, he ignored the boundaries of "I and you," so now he can ignore the boundaries of life and afterlife.

"This is the fundamental reasoning behind beseeching those in the grave to intercede on our behalf. And this, in fact, has been the common practice in Jewish communities around the world.

"So you see there is plenty of documented evidence that the Early Church prayed for their beloved deceased. So what in the world happened between that time, the time of the catacombs and now??

"Among other proofs, the Bible casually assumes that great prophets like Moses and Samuel would be praying for those on earth after they died

"1) Praying to Saints (or rather asking them to Intercede for us) Look at the Rich Man and Lazarus

"A) The rich man in Jesus' story asks Abraham to intercede, making two requests: a) relief from his suffering in the "bad" part of Hades (Lk 16:24), and 2) to send Lazarus to Earth to warn his five brothers to repent, so as not to end up in the same place and state (Lk 16:27-28).

"B) Whether this is a parable or not (many Protestant commentators say it is not, because parables don't include proper names), Jesus couldn't possibly teach doctrinal error by means of the story.

"C) Abraham's refusal to answer the prayer does not prove that he shouldn't have been prayed to in the first place. Prayers can be refused. He never said, "You can't pray to me!!!! Pray only to God!"

“D) Nor does his refusal prove that he lacks the power to fulfill the prayer (ultimately due to God’s power, of course). He said ‘no’ in the first instances, because the man’s punishment in the afterlife was already determined by God. He refused in the second instance because the “proposal” wasn’t going to work, anyway.

“He didn’t say, “I don’t have the power to send Lazarus and it’s blasphemous for you to think so.” He said, rather, that if he did send him, it wouldn’t make any difference as to the result Abraham hoped for (Lk 16:21: “If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced if some one should rise from the dead”).

“E) Thus we can only conclude that human beings in the afterlife can be prayed to, and that they have the power (delegated through God, using them as vessels or intermediaries) to fulfill the requests: in other words, exactly what the Catholic communion of saints and the invocation of saints holds. And it is straight from our Lord Jesus Christ. That example.

“F) Had Abraham fulfilled the request it would also be another instance of permitted communication between those in Heaven or the afterlife (in this case, Hades) and those on Earth, since the dead Lazarus would have returned to Earth, to talk to the five brothers. Protestants tell us this is unbiblical and against God’s will (and is the equivalent of necromancy), and yet there it is, right in Scripture, from Jesus.

“Another instance of Praying to Saints: Saul Petitions the Prophet Samuel After the Latter’s Death

“1 Samuel 28:15-16 Then Samuel said to Saul, “Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?” Saul answered, “I am in great distress; for the Philistines are warring against me, and God has turned away from me and answers me no more, either by prophets or by dreams; therefore I have summoned you to tell me what I shall do.” And Samuel said, “Why then do you ask me, since the LORD has turned from you and become your enemy?”

"The principle scenario here is the same as in #1: Samuel could properly be petitioned or, in effect, “prayed to” but he also could refuse the request, and he did so. As Samuel explained, he didn’t question the asking as wrong and sinful, but rather, refused because the request to save Saul was against God’s expressed will: which Samuel also knew about, as a departed saint. Moreover, Samuel knew (after his death) that Saul was to be defeated in battle the next day and would die (1 Sam 28:18-19)."

The only thing here is, consulting a necromancer, or someone who talks to the dead. Or basically, a witch. You know, that's not good.

"The Bible casually assumes that great prophets like Moses and Samuel would be praying for those on earth after they died:

"In Jeremiah 15:1 Then the LORD said to me, "Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my heart would not turn toward this people. Send them out of my sight and let them go!

"Again, it's not that they couldn't or shouldn't pray; rather, even their great prayers (as powerful intercessors couldn't accomplish something if it was already against the will of God. If they in fact weren't praying to God after their deaths, or shouldn't have, then God wouldn't have said that they did so; and/or would have condemned it, having brought it up at all in inspired revelation.

"The "bystanders" at Jesus' crucifixion provide another similar instance. They assumed that He could ask the prophet Elijah to save Him from the agony of the cross (Mt 27:46-50). They're presented as allies of Jesus (not enemies), since one of them gave Him a drink (Mt 27:48). Matthew 27:49 shows that this type of petition was commonly believed at the time."

That the Lord was calling out to Elijah to save Him, is what they thought it was.

"Jesus and Peter Simultaneously Prayed to Saints and for the Dead

"Tabitha was a disciple in Joppa who died. Peter prayed to her when he said "Tabitha, rise." She was dead, and he was addressing her. There is no impenetrable wall between Heaven and Earth. This is not only praying to the dead, but for the dead, since the passage says that Peter "prayed" before addressing Tabitha first person. And he was praying for her to come back to life.

"Our Lord Jesus does the same thing with regard to Lazarus. He prays for Lazarus and then speaks directly to a dead man effectively, "praying" to him "Lazarus, come out" (John 11:43)."

This information came out from, I think, Dave Armstrong. But I'm not positive.

Okay, moving on. I just want to share with you, that when I found out about Purgatory, I had a serious examination of my life. And I realized, I could not blur the lines anymore. Selfishness was selfishness; lying was lying. Being blind to the needs around me, being neglectful, was neglect: a sin, and slothful, as well.

Dear ones, if you have not learned to be Christlike, or at the very least have done some serious repenting, every day you fail in charity or gossiping. You may very well be detained in a place of purification where you learn Christlike behavior and forsake worldliness.

In other words, you will be given opportunities to exercise charity where you were careless or unkind to others. The tradition about Purgatory is it is like fire in your soul. It is portrayed with flames. And when I did a teaching on purgatory for my old website, ourladylightofthewoods.org, I took a picture of flames in our wood-burning stove, and an incredible image of a woman dancing in the fire came out.

This was also at the same time we were praying for a couple who had been murdered in their bed on New Year's Eve, by their son.

We have certain habit patterns of behavior, that come from sinful decisions. We may have practiced them all our life long...but at the last minute come to Jesus. What happens with a soul who has done no reparation for their sins, has made no compensation for the damages they did? What happens to a soul who is used to being ugly and harsh with others? Does he or she just march into Heaven, fully reformed and kind?

No. I don't believe it. Rather, I believe we must learn new behavior patterns first before we are presented to the souls in Heaven.

Have you ever experienced remorse so intense that you felt fire burning your bones? I have felt this kind of remorse for sins committed, and it was all consuming, completely capturing my attention so I could do nothing but cry and repent.

I believe this is what the Purgatorial fire is all about. Standing before God with no barrier between the two of you and seeing for the first time the real effect your sins had upon you and others.

I believe the Lord, in His kindness, keeps some things about ourselves from us, because we could not handle seeing them just yet. But when we are stripped of our earthly bodies, then we can see those dark places in our souls with no distractions, no chocolate, no internet, no movies, no music. Just our sin and its effects on others.

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