

The Three Afterlife Destinations

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1 Dicussions

1.1 Analysis of the Three-Destination Hypothesis

The three-destination hypothesis posits that human souls will end up in one of three distinct eternal states based on their life choices and spiritual condition: the Kingdom of Heaven (Right-hand/Sheep), a state of purification (Lost-sheep/Lukewarm), or Hell (Left-hand/Goats). Each destination is characterized by different criteria and outcomes, deeply rooted in Christian theology.

Right-hand (Dexiá)/Sheep (Próvata)/Kingdom (Basileía)/Hot (Thermós)/Life-age-during (Zō ai nios)

Characteristics:

Kingdom of Heaven: This is the ultimate reward for the righteous who have lived a life in accordance with God's will.

Sheep: Represents those who have faithfully followed Jesus, demonstrating love, compassion, and obedience.

Hot: Indicates fervent devotion and commitment to God.

Life-age-during: Eternal life, a state of perpetual communion with God.

Scriptural Basis:

- **Matthew 25:33-34:** The righteous (sheep) are placed on the right-hand of God and invited to inherit the Kingdom.
- **Matthew 25:46:** The righteous receive eternal life.
- **John 10:27-28:** Jesus' sheep hear His voice and follow Him, receiving eternal life.

Catechism Reference:

- **Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1723:** True happiness is found in God alone, the source of every good and of all love. This beatitude requires decisive moral choices and purity of heart.

Requirements:

- **Faith and Obedience:** Living in accordance with Jesus' teachings and commandments.
- **Virtuous Living:** Demonstrating love, compassion, and humility.
- **Spiritual Devotion:** Maintaining a fervent relationship with God, characterized by regular prayer, worship, and good deeds.

Lost-sheep (Próvata)/Lukewarm (Chliarós)/Hades (Hádēs)/Purgatory (Kathart rio) Characteristics:

- **State of Purification:** A temporary state where souls undergo purification before entering Heaven.
- **Lost-sheep:** Those who have strayed from righteousness but are still within God's care.
- **Lukewarm:** Souls that have not fully committed to God, showing half-hearted devotion.
- **Hades/Purgatory:** A place of temporary suffering and purification.

Scriptural Basis:

- **Matthew 18:12-14:** The lost sheep are sought after by the shepherd, indicating God's desire to reclaim those who have strayed.
- **Revelation 3:15-16:** Lukewarm individuals are warned of their need to fully commit to God.
- **1 Corinthians 3:15:** Describes the purification process, where souls are saved but as through fire.

Catechism Reference:

- **Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1031:** Purgatory is a final purification for the elect, distinct from the punishment of the damned. It involves a cleansing fire for

certain lesser faults.

Requirements:

Repentance: A sincere turn from sin and a commitment to follow God's will.

Purification: Enduring the process of purification, which may involve suffering and repentance.

Hope and Perseverance: Maintaining hope in God's mercy and striving to persevere in faith.

Left-hand (Aristerá)/Goats (Ériphoi)/Cold (Psychrós)/Ghenna (Géenna)/Eternal Punishment (Kólasis ai nios) Characteristics:

Hell: A state of eternal separation from God and punishment for the wicked.

Goats: Represents those who have rejected God's commandments and lived in sin.

Cold: Indicates a complete lack of spiritual fervor and commitment to God.

Ghenna/Eternal Punishment: A place of perpetual torment and exclusion from God's presence.

Scriptural Basis:

Matthew 25:41: The goats are placed on the left-hand and condemned to eternal fire.

Matthew 25:46: The wicked go to eternal punishment.

Mark 9:43: Warns of the unquenchable fire of Hell for those who do not turn from sin.

Catechism Reference:

Orthodox Catechism, 371: Describes Hell as a place and state of eternal torment and exclusion from the sight of God for unrepentant sinners.

Requirements:

Rejection of God: Living a life in opposition to God's will and commandments.

Unrepentance: Refusing to turn from sin and seek God's forgiveness.

Persistent Sin: Engaging in a lifestyle characterized by sin without remorse or change.

1.2 Contrasting the Destinations

Kingdom of Heaven vs. State of Purification:

The Kingdom of Heaven is the ultimate goal, reserved for those who have lived righteously and followed Jesus' teachings faithfully. In contrast, the state of purification (Purgatory) is a temporary phase for those who have not fully achieved righteousness

but are still within God's grace. While the Kingdom of Heaven offers eternal joy and communion with God, Purgatory involves temporary suffering aimed at cleansing and preparing souls for eternal life.

Kingdom of Heaven vs. Hell:

- The Kingdom of Heaven represents eternal life and bliss in the presence of God, achieved through virtuous living and obedience to God's commandments. Hell, on the other hand, is a state of eternal separation and punishment for those who have rejected God and lived in persistent sin. The stark contrast lies in the outcomes: eternal reward and communion with God versus eternal torment and exclusion.

State of Purification vs. Hell:

- The state of purification is a temporary phase where souls undergo cleansing before entering Heaven. It signifies hope and the possibility of redemption. Hell, however, is a permanent state of punishment and separation from God, with no hope of redemption. The key difference is that Purgatory is transitional and aimed at eventual union with God, while Hell is final and represents eternal condemnation.

1.3 Conclusion

The three-destination hypothesis emphasizes the importance of living a virtuous life, repentance, and spiritual devotion. It underscores the belief in divine justice and mercy, offering eternal rewards for the righteous, purification for those who have strayed but remain within God's grace, and eternal punishment for the unrepentant wicked. Understanding these distinctions helps to guide believers in their spiritual journey, encouraging them to strive for righteousness, seek repentance, and maintain a fervent relationship with God.

2 Quotes

2.1 Right-hand (Dexiá)/Sheep (Próvata)/Kingdom (Basileía)/Hot (Thermós)/Life-age-during (Zō ai nios)

1. **Matthew 25:33-34 (NIV):** "He will put the sheep (, próvata) on his right (, dexiá) and the goats on his left. Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom (, basileía)

prepared for you since the creation of the world.’”

2. **Matthew 25:46 (NIV):** “Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life (, zō ai nios).”

3. **Revelation 3:15-16 (NIV):** “I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot (, thermós). I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth.”

4. **John 10:27-28 (NIV):** “My sheep (, próvata) listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life (, zō ai nios), and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand.”

Catholic Catechism

1. **Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1723:** “The beatitude we are promised confronts us with decisive moral choices. It invites us to purify our hearts of bad instincts and to seek the love of God above all else. It teaches us that true happiness is not found in riches or well-being, in human fame or power, or in any human achievement—however beneficial it may be—such as science, technology, and art, or indeed in any creature, but in God alone, the source of every good and of all love.”

Early Christian Writings

1. **The Didache 16:1:** “Be watchful for your life; let your lamps not be quenched and your loins not ungirded, but be ready, for you do not know the hour in which our Lord comes.”

2. **Macarius of Egypt, Homilies 5.8:** “But when you hear that there are sheep, understand that it means the righteous, who are on the right hand of God; and the goats are the sinners, who are on the left.”

2.2 **Lost-sheep (Próvata)/Lukewarm (Chliarós)/Hades (Hádēs)/Purgatory (Kathart rio)**

1. **Matthew 18:12-14 (NIV):** “What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep (, próvata), and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? And if he finds it, truly I tell you, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off. In the same way, your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should perish.”

2. **Revelation 3:15-16 (NIV):** “I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm (, chliarós)—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth.”

3. **1 Corinthians 3:15 (NIV):** “If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames.”

4. **Luke 16:23 (NIV):** “In Hades (, Hádēs), where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side.”

Catholic Catechism

1. **Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1031:** “The Church gives the name Purgatory to this final purification of the elect, which is entirely different from the punishment of the damned. The Church formulated her doctrine of faith on Purgatory especially at the Councils of Florence and Trent. The tradition of the Church, by reference to certain texts of Scripture, speaks of a cleansing fire: ‘As for certain lesser faults, we must believe that, before the Final Judgment, there is a purifying fire. He who is truth says that whoever utters blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will be pardoned neither in this age (, en toutō tō ai ni) nor in the age to come (, en tō méllonti ai ni).’ From

this sentence we understand that certain offenses can be forgiven in this age (, en toutō tō ai ni), but certain others in the age to come (, en tō méllonti ai ni).”

Note: The term “eternal” in “eternal punishment” (, kólasis ai nios) and “eternal life” (, zō ai nios) in Matthew 25:46 also uses the Greek word (ai nios). This same word is translated as “age” in the phrases “this age” (, en toutō tō ai ni) and “the age to come” (, en tō méllonti ai ni), showing that “eternal” is a lexical variation of the word referring to a period of time or age.

Anabaptist Confession

1. **The Dordrecht Confession of Faith (1632), Article XVIII:** “Of the Resurrection of the Dead, and the Last Judgment: Finally, concerning the resurrection of the dead, we confess, according to the Holy Scriptures, that all men who shall have died shall be raised up, and the righteous shall be glorified and received into life everlasting, but the wicked shall be condemned to eternal death and punishment.”

2.3 Left-hand (Aristerá)/Goats (Ériphoi)/Cold (Psychrós)/Ghenna (Géenna)/Eternal Punishment (Kólasis ai nios)

1. **Matthew 25:41 (NIV):** “Then he will say to those on his left (, aristerá), ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.’”

2. **Matthew 25:46 (NIV):** “Then they will go away to eternal punishment (, kólasis ai nios), but the righteous to eternal life.”

3. **Revelation 3:15-16 (NIV):** “I know your deeds, that you are neither cold (, psychrós) nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot

nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth.”

4. **Mark 9:43 (NIV):** “If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell (, géenna), where the fire never goes out.”

Orthodox Catechism

1. **Orthodox Catechism, 371:** “Gehenna, or Hell, is a place and state of eternal torment and exclusion from the sight of God, for those who are judged at the last day to have been unrepentant sinners.”

Early Anabaptist Writing

1. **The Martyrs Mirror, Thieleman J. van Braght:** “The righteous shall inherit eternal life, but the ungodly and the sinner shall be condemned to everlasting fire. Thus it is evident that two different places shall be the everlasting abodes of men, namely, the kingdom of heaven and hell.”

So, even though there may be two final destinations (Heaven and Gehenna), there is also evidence of an intermediate destination of Purgatory, or being part of the “spit out.” This intermediate state reflects the ongoing process of purification and redemption for those who are neither wholly righteous nor entirely wicked, emphasizing the depth and nuance in Christian eschatology. It is important for believers not to be complacent, thinking they just need to do well enough for Purgatory, as they may be stuck there for a whole other age. Instead, it is imperative to strive to follow Jesus’s commandments in this life and work diligently on their inner transformation. By doing so, they prepare themselves for their personal encounter with the Lord and aim for the ultimate reward of eternal communion with Him.