



Scriptures and Doctrine :: Heaven Without Earth

Heaven Without Earth - posted by docs (), on: 2014/8/20 15:55

Colin Chapman and Stephen Sizer are two comrades of sorts who are among the most ardent critics of modern Israel and any biblical claims that Israel is still relevant to the plan of God. Israel has been nullified and replaced is the foundation of their teachings and their influence is growing especially within the Anglican communion at least in the UK. In my opinion, the quote from Sizer below demonstrates the incorrect view that the earthly cannot have anything to do with the kingdom of God since the kingdom of God is a spiritual kingdom. If they want to criticize Israel then fine but they show a non Hebrew world view in my opinion that the material order is somehow of a lesser value than the spiritual. The Hebrew world view combines them both - spiritual materiality. Their view and the criticism of their view discussed below is a good topic for conversation among the brethren in my opinion. The "redefining" of the spiritual kingdom of God as having nothing to do with anything earthly may have been carried too far in my opinion.

There's a mention of the Palestinian conflict which is a highly grievous thing especially now and I have prayed for the Palestinians the past couple of years more than I ever have. Chapman takes issue with many Jewish Christians and their supporters and especially those in America. And Sizer has shared speaking platforms with Yassar Arafat and the like. Yet that is not the main point of the post. It's about how the Hebrew concept of spiritual materiality has lost its place in the views surrounding the hyper opinion that since the kingdom of God is spiritual and within you it will not involve anything earthly.

Spiritual materiality is a phrase that denotes the view that the created physical world has spiritual origins and is holy and good.

(BEGIN)

Heaven Without Earth

While the question of spiritual materiality is dealt with in chapter 8 in greater detail, at this juncture it is appropriate to consider how both Chapman and Sizer raise the question of the carnality of Christian Zionism and its contrast which they perceive to be the spirituality of the kingdom of Jesus Christ.

Yes, there is cause for complaint here concerning those who portray eschatology in terms of sensationalist, materialistic pop-prophecy. Though it would be better and probably more effectual, if such criticism were to come from those who evidence a genuine and heartfelt love for the Jewish people, who while remaining enemies of the gospel are at the same time beloved by God because of His fidelity to the Abrahamic covenant (Rom 11:28). But Chapman and Sizer retain an ardent repudiation of the present nation of Israel allegedly on account of its well-earned nullification by God. They claim that Christian justification for the renunciation of modern Israel's military militancy is especially warranted because of unbelief, secularity, extreme military defense of its borders, and the unjust mistreatment and displacement of many Palestinians within its domain. So in place of an earthly eschatological hope for Jerusalem within the land of Israel, Chapman and Sizer promote a heavenly redefinition with material and spiritual dichotomies below and above. A particular cluster of references is then appealed to, especially Gal 4:25-26 and Heb 11:10,16; 12:22-23. At stake here is the vital matter of hermeneutics dealt with especially in chapter 7 of this book (see also chapters 8-11). We may note at this point that for Sizer Jerusalem as the capital of Israel no longer has any historic, earthly role of divine, biblical significance.

Quoting Sizer,

"The New Testament...knows nothing of a preoccupation with a nationalistic and materialistic earthly Jerusalem, let alone Zionism as it exists today....Jesus explained further, saying, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent any arrest by the Jews. But now My kingdom is from another place" (John 18:36)....Christians are told instead to inhabit Jerusalem by faith and look forward to the heavenly Jerusalem....Paul takes a promise originally referring to the earthly Jerusalem (Gal 4:26) and applies it to the Jerusalem above, which is the home of all who believe in Jesus Christ."

It is asserted that the Christian anticipates a nebulous, ethereal, non-material, Platonic higher level of existence (italics

emphasis mine) in the economy of heaven above. But I believe that the Lord Jesus Christ did anticipate an earthly Jerusalem of spiritual materiality which would gloriously supplant the carnal materiality of Jerusalem that He wept over. He declared that the present Jerusalem was about to be left desolate in judgment. Yet the strong inference is that the humiliation would eventually yield to a glorious reversal of circumstances since Jesus continued, "For I tell you, you will never see Me again until you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!'" (Matt 23:38-39). So in this regard Alford described,

"that day, the subject of all prophecy, when your repentant people shall turn with true and loyal Hosannas and blessings to greet "Him whom they have pierced:" (Deut 4:30-31; Hosea 3:4-5; Zech 12:10; 14:8-11). Stier well remarks, "He who reads not this in the prophets, reads not yet the prophets aright."

When Paul wrote of the "Jerusalem above," he was not indicating that the Jerusalem below had been forever discarded for some abstract, amorphous Jerusalem, (italics emphasis mine) but rather that eschatological transformation of Zion whereby the holiness of heaven will have come down to regenerate the earthly Jerusalem. The result is, as John Milton described, a time when,

"Earth be changed to Heav'n, and Heav'n to Earth,
One Kingdom, Joy and Union without end"

Then will have come to pass "the Messianic Age

Re: Heaven Without Earth - posted by Sidewalk (), on: 2014/8/20 20:40

One might ask, what is the point?

Paul advises the Corinthians, and us, that eye hath not seen nor has ear heard the things He has prepared for those that love Him. There seems to exist by design something of a veil over the magnificent coming works of God, to which we hold by faithful confidence that He is not lying to us.

I hold no credentials or meaningful degrees in Theological studies, but I have read Jesus' request of the disciples' prayer .

"Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in the earth as it is in heaven."

Many religious groups over the years have that passage so programmed away from their conscious minds that they don't hear the words as they are spoken. For my mind, Jesus is making a declaration of the Father's desire, and His own desire, with an aim to make it the disciples desire. As I read Paul's description of things in Romans 8 I sense that he got that part- envisioning an end to the earth's being subject to futility (the birth and death cycle) and that the entire creation would enter into the glorious liberty of the children, or "sons" of God. Earth stuff.

We have never seen earth without the curse of death and sin. The bible indicates to me that we who believe in Jesus will see that.

Am I missing something?

Re: the earth - posted by budgie, on: 2014/8/21 18:35

One reality that remains true and is very biblical is that in the beginning God created the earth with God walking in intimacy with Adam on this earth

At the end God creates a new heaven and earth a new immortal man

The new Jerusalem is on earth

God and Christ are on this earth forever on this earth

Jesus said for us to pray for His kingdom to be on earth

That will be accomplished

In the meanwhile us Gentiles who have been grafted into the true commonwealth of Israel because some of them did not believe must continue spreading the good news of the kingdom of God with the branches that were not broken off

One new man in Christ

Jew and Gentile are one man and body in Christ

Let us not boast because if we do not believe we can be also broken off

Revelations ends on earth
Read the last few chapters
Gods heart is for man on earth
He wants to make his abode forever

Re: - posted by Heydave (), on: 2014/8/22 4:17

Yes docs. you have picked up on a sad movement within the Anglican church, but I fear it is not just there but prevalent throughout Christendom. The problem with Sizer's (and others like him) view is it seems driven by a hatred for Israel, which distorts their whole understanding.

For some Christian's to hold to a view that Israel as a physical nation is no longer a part of God's plan is one thing. I don't agree with them, but I can accept there are differences in understanding on this. What I find absolutely shocking is that too often those who take this position (like Sizer) often exhibit a passionate hatred of Israel. This they do to the point of condemning the very existence of Israel and actively supporting known terrorist factions and people.

Sizer's stance is more than just a little unbalanced. When you consider that even non Christian national leaders accept that Israel has a right to defend themselves against terrorist attacks, yet this so called 'ministers of Christ' defends and befriends the terrorists and condemn a legitimate nation as terrorist'. If he does not believe we should be concerned with earthly kingdoms, why does he spend so much time meddling in the affairs of these kingdoms?? Makes you wonder what the real motive is. Smells a bit sinister to me.

Here is an interesting NT scripture I noticed recently that confirms that all the prophecies in the OT (most of which predict the Kingdom of God on earth) will be fulfilled....

Acts 3:19-21

"Repent therefore.....that he may send Jesus Christ.....whom heaven must receive UNTIL the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of His HOLY PROPHETS since the world began."

Abridged and capitalised for easier reading.

This is Peter speaking to Jews in Jerusalem, telling them there was still an opportunity for them to repent and if they did turn to the Lord, then God would send Jesus back and restore all things. What things is he talking about? Well in verse 25 of this speech Peter says...

"You are sons of the prophets, and the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, 'and in your seed all the families of the EARTH shall be blessed'."

We know that Israel as a whole did not at that time repent and turn to the Lord, but the promise still stands that when they do say 'blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD', that Christ will return and 'restore' all things. Praise His name!

Re: Remembering His Covenants - posted by Sidewalk (), on: 2014/8/22 11:20

In this world of personal bankruptcies, reposessions, divorces, broken promises, and crooked business deals, we might forget that God keeps His promises.

You may have seen the story from a week or so ago where the Israeli radar observer saw the Hamas' rocket heading for a civilian population center in Israel. Suddenly a freak wind ripped the rocket off its course and threw it into the sea where it harmed no one. Hmmmm?

Other stories surrounding the birth of the modern state of Israel are also fascinating, the retired Jewish pilots from WWII who were recruited to come to Israel and fly some scrap old German planes in defense of the new nation, how they turned back thousands of invaders.

Google "The birth of the Israeli Air Force." You will hopefully find a video, 7:45 minutes long. Grab a kleenex and hit "PI

ay."

The hand of God, still working, still holding what was promised to Abraham and to David, still bringing to the harvest His rebellious children.

He sees the outcome of all this, while we quibble over the details and try to fit His works into our theology!

Not to fear, every knee will bow, every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. And the final story of Israel will surprise us all!

Re: edited - posted by Sidewalk (), on: 2014/8/22 16:13

I have edited my post to include a Google path to the story I referenced of the birth of the Israeli Air Force. Listen to the stories of the mostly American men who defied the American laws and went to serve as Israel was born. Breathtaking!

The Birth of the Israeli Air Force.

Re: Unity Without Diversity - posted by docs (), on: 2014/8/24 6:04

I've never been able to quite understand the reaction I have encountered sometimes when I mention a millennial kingdom on earth with Christ residing in the specific and same land He ascended from and will return to. The reaction I have gotten is, "That can't be because there is no Jew or Gentile in Christ." I still haven't understood that answer entirely but maybe some of the points and criticisms below address it. How can Christ residing in a specific land among a specific people be shortchanging the rest of everyone? Does the one new man in Christ nullify any and all diversity within the one body?

(BEGIN)

Unity Without Diversity

One of the most fundamental errors of Chapman and Sizer concerns an oft-repeated logical fallacy, namely that God's design that the redeemed of all ages become one in Christ Jesus excludes the possibility of any diversity existing within this unity. While the matter concerning the land of Israel is dealt with more in chapter 9 of this book, both Chapman and Sizer suggest that it is the paradise of Eden that leads to the promised land flowing with milk and honey and ultimately the whole world as inherited by Abraham (Rom 4:13). It seems that this concept is derived from O. Palmer Robertson who references Christopher Wright, although N. T. Wright made the same point and expressed indebtedness to W.D. Davies. Whatever the source of this concept, the argument runs that because redemption in Christ eventually encompasses the whole earth as the new promised land, so to speak, the OT boundaries of the land of Israel have become inconsequential. In other words, a new, transcendent unity has eliminated the possibility of diversity incorporating Israel and the Gentile nations.

Quoting N.T. Wright,

"He had not come to rehabilitate the symbol of the holy land, but to subsume it within a different fulfillment of the kingdom, which would embrace the whole creation....Jesus spent His whole ministry redefining what the kingdom meant. He refused to give up the symbolic language of the kingdom, but filled it with such new content that....he powerfully subverted Jewish expectations."

Sizer makes the same point, except that in caustically denouncing the literal hermeneutic of Christian Zionism, which, it is alleged, "Provides a theological endorsement for racial segregation, apartheid and war", He invokes Robertson to describe a new covenant perspective.

"In the process of redemptive history, a dramatic movement has been made from type to reality, from shadow to substance. The land which once was the specific locale of God's redemptive working served well within the old covenant as a picture of Paradise lost and promised. Now, however, in the era of new-covenant fulfillment, the land has been expanded to encompass the cosmos....In this age of fulfillment, therefore, a retrogression to the limited forms of the old covenant must be neither expected or promoted. Reality must not give way to shadow."

In response, the fundamental error of identifying the promised land with the bilateral Mosaic covenant rather than the u

nilateral Abrahamic covenant is once again most prominent. Adding to the confusion here is the ignoring of the fact that the new covenant was made with "the house of Israel and with the house of Judah" (Jer 31:31-34), and only indirectly with the church. Though of course, Romans 11 makes it clear that the Gentiles, as wild olive branches, are grafted into the Abrahamic natural olive tree so that they might become partakers of new covenant blessings. Furthermore, since Chapman, Wright, Sizer, and Robertson wrongly identify the land with the shadowy nature of the Mosaic covenant, they also ignore the fact that Jeremiah 31, where the new covenant supercedes the old, is further described in Jeremiah 32. Here it is "an everlasting covenant" (verse 40) including God's promise that He "will plant them faithfully in this land with all My mind and heart" (verse 41) "because I will restore their fortunes" (verse 44). Plainly the land is part of the inheritance of the new covenant (see Ezekiel 36:24-28; 37:1-14).

To return to the original point of disagreement, let us happily assert the glorious truth that awaits all the people of God, namely, the universal, sole reign of His Son over this universe when, "the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the LORD's glory, as the waters cover the sea" (Isa 2:14; see Isa 11:9, Zech 14:9). Then how is it necessary that this heavenly economy on earth will be strictly and indistinguishably homogenous? Could angels then endure such a distinct existence? If there is enormous and personal diversity within the triunity of the one and true living God, and His church manifests the diversity of giftedness within that one body, then how is it not to be expected, with the personal, distinguishable presence of Moses, Elijah, David, and Paul that there will also be an ethnic, national, and territorial diversity within the perfect ecumenicity of that kingdom? And how will it faintly be inconsistent with the gospel when the nation of redeemed Israel will distinctively reign with the Gentile nations while manifesting a diversity within the perfect unity of the kingdom of Christ?

"Future Israel" - by Barry Horner - Chapter 4 - "Israel and Contemporary Examples of Anti-Judaism In The UK" - pg 96-98.)

Re: Hebrew thought - posted by docs (), on: 2014/8/30 5:37

"Hebrew thought saw an essential unity between man and nature. The prophets do not think of the earth as merely the indifferent theater on which man carries out his normal task but as the expression of the divine glory. The Old Testament nowhere holds forth the hope of a bodiless, non-material, purely "spiritual" redemption as did Greek thought. The earth is the divinely ordained scene of human existence. Furthermore, the earth has been involved in the evils which sin has incurred. There is an interrelation of nature with the moral life of man; therefore the earth must also share in God's final redemption....The fact that man is a physical creature is not the measure of his sinfulness and therefore a state from which he must be delivered. Rather, the acceptance of his creaturehood and the confession of complete and utter dependence upon the Creator God are essential to man's true existence....Salvation for man does not mean deliverance from creaturehood, for it is not an evil thing but an essential and permanent element of man's true being. Salvation does not mean escape from bodily, creaturely existence. On the contrary, ultimate redemption will mean the redemption of the whole man. For this reason, the resurrection of the body is an integral part of the biblical hope."

(George Eldon Ladd - "The Presence of the Future" - 1974 - pg 59-60, also 63-64.

From a Hebrew Christian perspective:

"It is true that redemption from sin is not to be conceived of in terms that are primarily material. On this point the New Testament is as clear as the Old, though much more emphatic. But salvation is not to be thought of as exclusively spiritual and moral, as if Israel's living in the land had no spiritual and moral implications! The gospel message is replete with appreciation for the material realm. The New Testament makes it quite clear that the material is the arena in which ultimate salvation is to take place (Rom 8:18-25), thus reconfirming Old Testament expectation. Even our bodies are to be redeemed."

(B. Moaz - "People, land and Torah: a Jewish Christian perspective", in "The Land of Promise" - 2,000, pg 196)

Me: Many times when a future for Israel is mentioned the oppositional response may be, "But that can't be because Christ said His kingdom was not of this world." I'm thinking that phrase from scripture has been taken way out of context and has come to mean something Christ did not imply. Couldn't He have meant that His kingdom does not operate according to the principles and motivations and philosophies that dominate this present world and age? I'm thinking He didn't mean either that a day would come when His spiritual kingdom would completely swallow up the material world and create order in favor of a completely heavenly mode of existence minus anything earthly. And if the earthly is eliminated then certainly Israel would not be dwelling on a piece of earthly land in the future because Christ's kingdom is not of this world the thinking goes. I'm not sure all that is as sound as it has been presented to be.

'Nuf from here. Thank you and blessings to you.