



The Sword & The Plow

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Miraculous Rapture or Departure by Death, Which?

Kurt Simmons

Read literally, I Cor. 15:51 and I Thess. 4:13-17 suggest that the saints alive at Christ's return would be changed, and wondrously translated to heaven in a manner similar to Enoch or Elijah. We feel this is mistaken, and that the better view is that the only "rapture" taught by scriptures occurs at the believer's death.

Change and Rapture - Not Same Events

The eschatological "change" of I Cor. 15:51 and the "catching-up" of I Thess. 4:17 are generally supposed to describe the same event in different language; *viz.*, those caught-up would be simultaneously changed from a material to an immaterial body, and so borne away to heaven. In fact, because "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven" (I Cor. 15:50), the idea of a literal change is *essential* to the idea the saints would be translated at Christ's return as they could not be carried away to heaven otherwise. However, in our view these passages do *not* describe the same event. The approach taken here is that the "change" was *legal and covenantal*, but the "catching-up" *actual and spatial*; the former accrued to the benefit of the church at the eschaton, the latter is experienced by believers one-by-one as they die.

Notion of Literal Rapture Present Among Early Church

Belief in a literal rapture is not new, but was present among first century believers. Jesus indicated that John would live until his return (Jn. 21:23). This prompted members of the early church to conclude John would not die, but would be translated to heaven with other believers at Christ's return. However, John dispels this notion entirely, completely disallowing that this was Jesus' meaning:

"Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" Jn. 21:23

It is difficult to understate the importance of John's statement as it bears upon the question before us. First, it shows that John would *in fact* live until Christ's return – a thorny issue for futurists if ever there was one! Second, it dispels the notion that those alive at Christ's coming would be translated and not see death. Obviously, the brethren had misconstrued Jesus' meaning. Theirs was a case of bad logic; they reasoned from mistaken premises to a wrong conclusion. Assuming that those alive at Christ's return would be translated, they concluded John would not die. But this was not to be the case. Jesus said elsewhere "There be

some standing here that shall not taste of death *till* they see Son of man coming in his kingdom” (Matt. 16:27). Notice Jesus did not say they would not die at all; he merely said they would not taste of death *before* (till) he came in the glory of his kingdom *then* they would die. From Jesus’ statements it seems plain that John was to be one of these.

What about the veil of silence that fell in the decades following A.D. 70? Where did Timothy, Titus, Luke, and others go? The silence of history regarding these men has led some to suppose an actual rapture of some sort occurred. But is there really a veil of silence following A.D. 70? No, there is not. We do not know what happened to each character named in the New Testament, but some information *has* come down to us. It is true that there is not as much information as we might hope or expect, but this can be explained by the almost *universal martyrdom* of the early church in the persecution under Nero. The imagery of Daniel and Revelation makes very clear that Nero’s persecution was world-wide and would witness the death of multitudes of believers. Those that did not suffer martyrdom were driven underground, perhaps literally in the catacombs, where they remained in hiding until the storm of persecution had passed. By the time of Domitian toward the end of the first century, Christians reemerged from hiding and history records their presence again. Indeed, history is *not* silent about the fate of the apostles and other Biblical characters at all. The church fathers record the tradition that Mark went to Alexandria, Thomas to India, Peter and Paul suffered martyrdom, and John went to Ephesus where he lived until the days of Trajan. Moreover, sacred tradition records that Clement and members of the holy family survived A.D. 70 and came together after the capture of the city to decide who should succeed James as head of the church, unanimously deciding upon Simon, the son of Clopas.¹ Hence, there is nothing to the idea that these men simply disappeared, and we need not resort to notions about a literal rapture to explain the perceived absence of Christians from history following A.D. 70. Indeed, the fact that John reportedly lived until the time of Trajan is a full refutation of the literal rapture view.

The Mystery of Marriage and the Eschatological Change

¹ Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, III, xi, 1.

If there was not a literal rapture or translation of believers to heaven at Christ’s coming, what does that say about a literal change? Plainly, if the one did not occur, neither did the other, for there could be no translation without there also being a change, and no metaphysical change without a translation. Therefore, proof that one did not occur *ipso facto* will disprove the other. But if there was no metaphysical change, what was there? Clearly, Paul said *something* was to happen. What, then, was it?

Paul said, “Behold I show you a *mystery*, we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed” (I Cor. 15:51). A “mystery” is something hidden, something wonderful and almost incomprehensible. In saying that the eschatological change was a “mystery,” Paul indicates that spiritual discernment is required to attain a proper understanding. Certainly, there is no mystery in a literal reading, and it requires no spiritual discernment to understand the “change” that way. Hence, if we would understand this mystery, we must think in different terms.

We would suggest that the conjugal union of man and wife whereby they become “one flesh” provides a good clue to the eschatological change of I Cor. 15:51. It is no coincidence that the second coming of Christ is portrayed under the imagery of the marriage of a bride and bridegroom (Matt. 25:1ff; II Cor. 11:2; Rev. 19:7-9; 21:2-20). The marriage of the Lamb and the bride at his coming, like the eschatological change, is termed a *mystery* (Eph. 5:32). Both speak to the *same event* under the guise of separate imagery. What is called a “change” in I Cor. 15:51 is styled a “marriage” in Eph. 5:32, and elsewhere (II Cor. 11:2; Rev. 19:7-9; 21:2, 9, 10). Thus, in understanding the symbolism behind the marriage, we can understand the eschatological change.

Contrary to what some believe, the marriage of the Lamb and bride is *NOT* the resurrection of the last day. The mistaken notion that the marriage is the resurrection of the last day is related to the idea of the literal rapture, which has it that the church on earth would be wondrously borne away to heaven at Christ’s coming. However, having dispelled the notion of a literal rapture, we need to also disabuse ourselves of the idea that the marriage is the resurrection. All imagery in the New Testament involving the marriage symbol portrays the

bridegroom coming *to earth*, not descending to Hades to raise the dead. Indeed, Rev. 21:2, 9, 10 shows the bride's dwelling - the new Jerusalem, the covenantal habitation of the saints - *coming down* out of heaven to earth, not ascending from earth or Hades to heaven. Plainly, rapture and resurrection were not the meaning of the marriage.

The "one flesh" relationship of man and woman is *legal and covenantal*. In marriage, a *legal fiction* occurs whereby the two identities are merged into one under the headship of the husband. The two are not actually "one flesh;" the death of the husband does not cause the death of the wife. They are one flesh merely in *contemplation of law*. Rather, the marriage of the Lamb is the *spiritual union* of Christ and his people, and points to the *covenantal relationship* whereby Christ washes and sanctifies the church with his own blood (Eph. 5:27). The period from Pentecost to the consummation in A.D. 70 was the *betrothal*. Paul told the Corinthians that he had *betrothed* them as a chaste virgin unto Christ (II Cor. 11:2). The consummation of the marriage would occur at Jesus' second coming (Rev. 19:7-9). The sanctifying power of Christ's redeeming blood - held in abeyance during the interim period of betrothal - would finally accrue to the benefit of the church at the consummation, when Christ was joined to his church in the bond of marriage under the gospel. In the Old Testament, the marriage of God to Israel is couched the same way; it was always covenantal, never of resurrection or rapture (Jer. 2:1-3; Ezek. 16:1-16). Elsewhere in the New Testament, the basic idea behind the marriage of Christ and the church is presented other ways, including imagery of *redemption, adoption, and citizenship*. (Rom. 8:23; Gal. 4:5; Eph. 1:14; Phil. 3:20) Redemption frees from the bondage of sin; adoption confers sonship leading to inheritance; citizenship gains admittance into the heavenly city. The common factor in all these cases is the status or condition arising *in law*.

If A = B and B = C, then A = C. If the eschatological change equals the marriage of Christ and the church; and the marriage was essentially legal and covenantal; then the eschatological change was essentially legal and covenantal, and points to the church's redemption from the bondage of sin. This is confirmed in the verses following Paul's announcement of the change, when he says the sting of death was sin and the strength of sin was

the law (I Cor. 15:57). Surely, Paul appends this statement here to show that the victory over Hades depended in the first instance upon victory over sin, and the victory over sin depended upon Christ's substitutionary death triumphing over (not annulling) the law. The debt of sin deprived man of immortality; loosing the bond of sin clothed believers with immortality as a matter of law, making them putative heirs of eternal life as the adopted sons of God. *This* was the change Paul envisioned for the church.

Better View of I Thess. 4:17

It still remains to explain I Thess. 4:17. The view we have settled upon, as the one most cognizant with scripture, is that the dead would be raised, *then* those alive at Christ's return would die one-by-one, and be caught up to meet the Lord in the air.

"For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." I Thess. 4:15-17

The conjunctive "then" in v. 17 shows that the catching up *follows* the resurrection in point of time. How much time is not stated; it is usually assumed that the two are substantially contemporaneous, but this is not justified. The truth is the text is silent; there is absolutely no basis for the conclusion that the catching up is contemporaneous with the resurrection; the whole notion rests upon supposition read into the text; nothing the text actually states. In Rev. 20:12-15, we have a picture of the resurrection. No rapture is presented in the imagery there. Just the opposite; as already noted, the city of the saints is shown coming *down* out of heaven to earth, not the saints going up from earth to heaven. However, there *is* a rapture of sorts in Rev. 14:14-16 where Christ is depicted upon a white cloud, harvesting the souls of the saints (wheat of the earth). The imagery indicates that it is the Lord's second coming, and that he is gathering his saints into the eternal kingdom by death under the beast, even while he is making war against his enemies. This is portrayed by the

winepress of the wrath of God trodden without the city, probably signifying Vespasian's Galilean campaign (vv.18-20). This corresponds with history, for the persecution under Nero (A.D. 64-68) overlapped the Jews' war with Rome (A.D. 66-70). It also accounts for the simultaneous harvests portrayed in the text, one of salvation, the other of wrath. The word used to describe the harvest of the wheat (*Gk. episynagogue*) has the same root that is used in II Thess. 2:1, where Paul speaks of the coming of the Lord and the saints being *gathered* unto him in the persecution by the "man of sin" and "son of perdition" (Nero). It also occurs in other eschatological passages to describe the *harvest of*

the saints into the kingdom of God (Matt. 3:12; 13:30). These passages teach that the gathering or harvest was not by rapture, but by *martyrdom* under Nero and the beast. As each saint died, Christ was there to meet him in the air. If this was true of the martyrs, may it not also be true of every believer? In II Cor. 5:10, Paul said to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. Read together with I Thess. 4:17, the result is clear: as we die we are each caught up to meet the Lord in the air "and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

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Symbolism of Heavens and Earth: National & Political, or Covenantal?

Kurt Simmons

Like the question which death was destroyed in AD 70 (Ans: Hadean), the proper interpretation of the symbolism behind use of "heavens and earth" in prophetic imagery is becoming more and more important to Preterism. In this article, we show that the prophets consistently use the imagery of the heavens and earth as symbols of thrones and dominions, and peoples and nations, and never in reference to the Old or New Testament.

Preterist Misconceptions

The probable majority of Preterists interpret the "heavens and earth" of New Testament prophecy as symbolic references to Jerusalem, the temple, and the Mosaic law. This interpretation reflects apologetic attempts to harmonize passages like II Peter 3 with predictions tying Christ's return to the fall of Jerusalem. The apostles sat upon the Mount of Olives and asked Jesus about the sign of his coming and the end of the world; he answered by describing events largely confined to the fall of Jerusalem. Add to this passages like Heb. 12:27, which describes a shaking of the heavens and earth in connection with the removal of the old law, and the conclusion seems inescapable: The heavens and earth of New Testament prophecy should be understood as metaphors for Jerusalem and the old law.

This view has had notable proponents over the centuries. Names like John Owen, John Lightfoot, Jonathan Edwards, and Charles Spurgeon can be marshaled in at least partial defense of this position. Given the prominence the fall of Jerusalem and the temple receive in scripture, we feel it is natural – perhaps even unavoidable - for students to reach this conclusion early in their studies. Indeed, this was our view for almost 25 years. More recently, however, we have come to reject it as scripturally indefensible.

Established Usage

Consistent use of "heavens and earth" by the prophets shows that it was *always* used nationally and politically, *never* locally or "covenantally." There is not a single occurrence in the Old Testament where "heavens and earth" are used as symbols or metaphors for the law of Moses, temple service, or priesthood. Not one. All instances are strictly confined to instances of world-wide judgment upon men and nations.

Isa. 13:9-11 - Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to **lay the land desolate**: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the **stars of heaven**

and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: **the sun** shall be darkened in his going forth, and **the moon** shall not cause her light to shine. And I will punish **the world** for [their] evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible.

This is a classic Preterist proof text; it has been used innumerable times to show that there have been many comings and days of the Lord, and that the language of a collapsing universe is purely figurative. We call to your attention two additional points, generally overlooked:

1) There is no covenantal aspect to this prophecy. God's wrath is based exclusively upon his moral judgments against the wickedness of man, not the Mosaic law. The especial object of judgment in this passage is Babylon, which was never in covenant relation with God. The figure of the heavens and earth in this passage is therefore easily seen to be *national and political*; it describes the overthrow of *thrones and dominions*, not the temple or its service.

2) This prophecy reflects a time of *world-wide* judgment. Isaiah specifically states that the fall of Babylon was merely part of a larger time of world-wrath at the hands of the Medes and Persians. The Mede-Persian Empire was like a great whirlwind of destruction that ranged from Elam in the North to Egypt in the West, and Arabia in the south to Europe in the north. No nation escaped; all felt the rod of God's chastisement by their hand.

Isa. 34:1-4 - Come near, **ye nations**, to hear; and hearken, **ye people**: let **the earth** hear, and all that is therein; **the world**, and all things that come forth of it. For the indignation of the LORD [is] upon **all nations**, and [his] fury upon **all their armies**: he hath utterly destroyed them, he hath delivered them to the slaughter. Their slain also shall be cast out, and their stink shall come up out of their carcasses, and the mountains shall be **melted** with their blood. And all the host of heaven shall be **dissolved**, and the heavens shall be **rolled together** as a scroll: and all their host shall **fall down**, as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling [fig] from the fig tree.

Here is another classic Preterist proof text. Its power and testimony to the figurative nature of prophetic imagery and language is unequalled. It

corresponds perfectly with Matthew twenty-four, II Peter 3, and the imagery of Revelation. Despite the language of collapsing universe, the specific object of wrath named in this passage is Edom. However, in our haste to prove the figurative nature of prophetic language, we have overlooked several things:

1) The passage expressly describes a time of *world-wrath* by the Babylonian Empire; Edom would fall in the course of God's judgment upon the nations.

2) Its language is clearly national and political, not covenantal. The judgments described had no connection to the Old Testament law.

Of course, there are passages identical to these, which describe judgment upon Old Testament Judea by the Babylonians; events that occurred within the very sweep of the prophecy concerning the fall of Edom, above. For example, Zephaniah describes God's judgment upon Judah in similar language. However, the same book also describes simultaneous judgment upon numerous other cities and nations, including Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Ekron, the Cherethites, Canaan, the Philistines, Moab, Ammon, and the Ethiopians! Although judgment upon Judah necessarily involved the nation's violation of the old law, the fact that identical language is used to describe judgment upon nations to whom the law did not apply proves that it is national and political, not covenantal; the fall of stars from the heavens and the dissolution of the earth describe the overthrow of thrones and dominions, and have no reference to the Old Testament at all.

Planting the Heavens & Founding the Earth

Isaiah fifty-one is another favorite text, supposedly affirming that "heavens and earth" carry a covenantal connotation. However, an objective reading of the text will show this is wrong:

"For the Lord shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord....Therefore the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: and they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away...The captive exile hasteneth that he may be loosed,

and that he should not die in the pit, nor that his bread should fail. But I am the Lord thy God, that **divided the sea**, whose waves roared: The Lord of hosts is his name. And I have put my words in thy mouth, and I have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand, that I may **plant the heavens**, and **lay the foundations of the earth**, and say unto Zion, thou art my people.” Isa. 51:3, 11, 14-16.

Reference to the sea is correctly identified with God’s parting the Red Sea for Israel at the exodus. This is then typically coupled with the language about “planting the heavens,” and “laying the foundations of the earth” as evidence that “heavens and earth” here refers to establishing the covenant at Sinai. However, this is really very bad exegesis, and belies a fundamental lack of comprehension. The context of the passage is plainly to the Babylonian captivity and God’s promise to bring a remnant back to the land. Notice that reference to dividing the Red Sea is in the *past tense, indicative mood*. Note also that reference to “planting the heavens” and laying the “foundations of the earth” is in the *future tense, subjunctive mood* (“that I may”). This shows that these two events are not connected in time; God is evoking the example of the Red Sea crossing from the *past* example as a demonstration of his ability to redeem his people out of captivity in the *future*. “Planting the heavens” is a poetic reference to repopulating the land by sowing it with the seed of men; “laying the foundations of the earth” describes the rebuilding of the waste and desolate places; the cities left uninhabited when their peoples were taken into captivity. This is easily seen by a simple comparison of similar passages. (Cf. Jer. 31:27; Ezek. 36:33, 36; Hos. 2:23)

Hebrews: Shaking the Heavens & Earth

It is true, of course, that Hebrews speaks about shaking the heavens and earth in the context of the destruction of Jerusalem (Heb. 12:22-28). This is cited by Preterists as evidence that the heavens and earth to be removed were covenantal, and referred to the Old Testament, and that the new heavens and earth refer, in turn, to the New Testament. Thus, Max King:

“The writer of the Book of Hebrews referred to this transformation as the shaking of heaven and earth, which signified the removing of the temporal Old Covenant world that was created at Mount Sinai

(Hebrews 12:26-27)...The destruction of Jerusalem and the earthly temple in A.D. 70 provides the context for the passing of the old heaven and earth...He sums up the new creation in terms of the coming of the kingdom of God in power by writing, “since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us give thanks, by which we offer to God an acceptable worship with reverence and awe” (Hebrews 12:28). Max R. King, *Israel’s New Heaven and Earth*, Mar 26, 2005

However, this is plainly wrong. Shaking of the heavens and earth at the eschaton was in no wise limited to Jerusalem and the Jews. The eschaton was a time of world-wrath, reaching from Italy, Spain, Germany, and Gaul, to Armenia, Asia, Egypt, and Palestine. One would have to be ignorant of world history at the time of Jerusalem’s fall not to see this. He would also have to be willing to overlook numerous passages of scripture that plainly signify the world-wide nature of the eschaton. Haggai, whom the writer of Hebrews quotes, provides its own best refutation of the “local” and “covenantal” eschaton model.

*Hag. 2:6, 7; 3:21, 22 – For thus saith the Lord of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the **heavens**, and the **earth**, and the **sea**, and the **dry land**; and **I will shake all nations**, and the desire of **all nations** shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts...I will **shake the heavens and the earth**; and I will **overthrow the throne of kingdoms**, and I will **destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen.**”*

As Preterists, we have interpreted this passage as quoted by the Hebrew writer in terms of Jerusalem’s fall, but, as we see, its *actual, original, and intended* scope was universal – the eschaton would be a time when *all nations* of the greater Roman world were shaken and the throne of *heathen kingdoms* overthrown. We should also note that the *heavens and earth* in this context point to higher powers and earth’s governments; they have *no covenantal significance* whatever.

The number of passages proving the eschaton was in no way localized to Judea and Galilee are so many it is almost tedious to read and recount them. Nevertheless, we provide here a few. Dan. 2:28-45; 7:1-28; Ps.2:8, 9; 96:11-13; cf. 98:9; 110:5, 6; Ezek. 38, 39; Joel 3; Mic. 4:3, 11-13; Zech. 12:3; 14:12; Matt. 25:31, 32; Rom. 1:18;

Rom. 2:8, 9; I Cor. 7:29, 31; II Thess. 2:8; II Tim. 4:1 Acts 17:30, 31; Revelation. It is axiomatic that if the eschaton involved the whole Roman world, then the heavens and earth dissolved at Christ's coming were much more than Judea.

Isaac Newton: Heavens & Earth National and Political

We noted above that many great names down through the centuries have interpreted the heavens and earth of II Peter three and Hebrews twelve in reference to the fall of Jerusalem, while overlooking Christ's wrath upon the rest of the Roman world. However, with the possible exception of Lightfoot, none of those cited interpreted the heavens and earth in "covenantal" terms, so far as we are aware. And even Lightfoot interpreted only the "elements" in reference to the Mosaic law, not the "heavens and earth." Hence, even these great commentators would agree that "heavens and earth" refer to thrones and dominions, not the Old or New Covenants *per se*.² The following explanation by Isaac Newton we submit is the correct one.

"The figurative language of the prophets is taken from the analogy between the world natural and an empire or kingdom considered as a world politic. Accordingly, the world natural, consisting of heaven and earth, signifies the whole world politic, consisting of thrones and people, or so much of it as is considered in prophecy; and the things in that world signify the analogous things in this. For the heavens and the things therein signify thrones and dignities, and those who enjoy them: and the earth, with the things thereon, the inferior people; and the

² We cite John Owen as but one example: 'It is evident, then, that in the prophetic idiom and manner of speech, by heavens and earth, the civil and religious state and combination of men in the world, and the men of them, were often understood. So were the heavens and earth that world which then was destroyed by the flood...On this foundation I affirm that the heavens and earth here intended in this prophecy of Peter, the coming of the Lord, the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men, mentioned in the destruction of that heaven and earth, do all of them relate, not to the last and final judgment of the world, but to that utter desolation and destruction that was to be made of the Judaical church and state.' John Owen, *Sermon on II Peter 3:11*.

lowest parts of the earth, called Hades or Hell, the lowest or most miserable part of them. Great earthquakes, and the shaking of heaven and earth, are put for the shaking of kingdoms, so as to distract and overthrow them; the creating of a new heaven and earth, and the passing of an old one; or the beginning and end of a world, for the rise and ruin of a body politic signified thereby. The sun, for the whole species and race of kings, in the kingdoms of the world politic; the moon, for the body of common people considered as the king's wife; the stars, for subordinate princes and great men; or for bishops and rulers of the people of God, when the sun is Christ. Setting of the sun, moon, and stars; darkening the sun, turning the moon into blood, and falling of the stars, for the ceasing of a kingdom." (*Observations on the Prophecies*, Part i. chap. ii)

If the heavens and earth put down at Christ's coming were the throne and dominions of Nero Caesar, the Sanhedrin and rulers of the Jews, together with other temporal power who rejected the gospel and persecuted the church, then the new heavens and earth are best understood as the government of Christ, ruling the nations in righteousness with an iron rod.

Covenantal Heavens & Earth: All the Rage among Universalists

It is no secret that Presence Ministries of Max R. King, who has built his writing career on the covenantal heavens and earth model, has gone over to Universalism. The number of articles and quotes that may be marshaled in support of this charge make it beyond successful refutation. Indeed, Presence Ministries feels no need to even deny the accusation by issuing a statement or disclaimer. We here provide quotes from Universalists of varying shades and colors, all of whom make happy use of the covenantal heavens and earth concept to advance their cause. The last quote is by Tim Martin; although not a Universalist, his theology nevertheless bears an obvious logical connection thereto. All the people quoted accept the basic covenantal heavens and earth model of King. Please note the progression of thought:

Tim King³ - "Simply stated, man is changed because his world changed. Man is reconciled to God because he no longer lives under the rule of

³ Tim King is Max King's son and former president of King's Presence Ministries

sin and death as determined by the Mosaic world. Through the gift of Christ he dwells in a world of righteousness and life. The issue is cosmic and corporate, not individual and limited.” Tim King, *Comprehensive Grace*, 2005

Kevin Beck⁴ - “There’s no sin and no sin-related death in a world that has the New Jerusalem in it’s midst.” Kevin Beck, *The Creation of Jerusalem*, Feb, 08

David Timm⁵ - The second Adam (Christ) reversed all the spiritual separation brought by the first Adam, not just part of it...in the new world people are reconciled to God without any say in the matter. God loves all those that He has made in His image equally. David Timm, *Grace Upon All*, Oct. 2006

David Embury⁶- "A man was who he was according to his 'world', and for the Jews their world centred around Yahweh - they were His people and He their God, and so by covenant. Who were the first-fruit believers in Paul's eyes? None other than the 'Body of Christ'. Having been crucified, buried and raised in Christ they were thus delivered out of the body of sin and death i.e., the Old Covenant world, or what we might call the 'Body of Moses' – Paul having spoken of "the fathers" being "baptized into Moses" etc. [can you see the train of thought?] The designation "the flesh" is not one facet of man as opposed to another part of man i.e., "the spirit", but rather "the flesh" speaks of man *as a whole* in a given mode or realm of existence, as does likewise *the spirit*. So Paul's spirit/flesh language was indicative of life under covenant, either of the "flesh" as in OC or of the "spirit" as in NC – reading Gal 3 and Phil 3 bears this out." David Embury, Planet Preterist post, Friday, December 05 @ 20:23:16 PST

Ed Burely⁷ – “In spite of the fact that I do not believe that the first chapters of Genesis have anything to do with the physical creation (but instead with a covenant creation), I still will not

⁴ Kevin Beck is president of Presence Ministries

⁵ David Timm is author of a Universalist article entitled *Grace Upon All* was posted by Presence Ministries in October, 2006.

⁶ Embury espouses a form of Universalism he styles “pantelism.”

⁷ Burely is author of *The Death of Death*, an article affirming all who were dead in Adam are now alive in Christ, regardless of faith or obedience. *The Death of Death* posted on Planet Preterist, Wednesday, February 25 @ 07:10:51 PST

buy an argument that says "young earth" but not with biblical evidence. A covenantal view of the bible's beginning, along with scientific data, speaks to me that this earth, and this universe is old." Ed Burely, Planet Preterist, Tuesday, November 13 @ 10:56:06 PST

Tim Martin⁸ - "Just as the formation of Israel and giving of the Law was the metaphorical creation of “heaven and earth,” so the destruction of the Judaic society, the Law, the priesthood, and temple would be the passing away of Israel’s “heaven and earth.” Tim Martin, *Beyond Creation Science* (unpublished manuscript version)

“Do you believe that there were any people outside of the garden at creation? If all were in the garden in God's first (what you take to be physical) creation, wouldn't that have implications for God's redemption?...As you can see, it could be that it's never been about us doing anything (right or wrong); *it's always been about God redeeming his creation; not just small parts of it.*” Tim Martin, Planet Preterist Post, Thursday, February 21 @ 09:48, 52:05 PST

“Redeeming all of his creation” means all in the “covenant creation” (“covenantal heavens and earth”). Thus, to avoid the Universalism inherent in placing all men in Revelation’s new heavens and earth (where these are interpreted as the New Testament), Martin is forced to place other men outside of his “covenantal garden of Eden.” Tim King and Kevin Beck, on the other hand, make no qualms that all mankind is redeemed in the new heavens and earth. Such is the mischief the covenantal heavens and earth model has wrought.

Conclusion

Established usage shows that “heavens and earth” were metaphors for thrones and dominions, peoples and nations. They have never had any covenantal signification in scripture. Preterists need to disabuse themselves of this erroneous idea.

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⁸ Martin is co-author of *Beyond Creation Science*, a book that synthesizes King’s Covenant Eschatology with Old Earth Creationism and a local (vs. universal) flood.

How Do We Spend Our Years?

By

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'We spend our years as a tale is told.' Psalms 90:9

The year 2007 has vanished for ever. It will never return. We only have our memories of its joys and sorrows, of its hopes and disappointments. Another year, 2008, has arrived. It is hoped that the Lord will give us also this year as a token of his goodness. The important question is: How do we spend our years? It may be profitable to reflect on this weighty concern, especially when we prayerfully base our considerations on the Word of God. What passage is more profound in this regard than the ninetieth Psalm?

Other authors have dwelled on the majestic theme of human mortality; however, no treatise on this subject has reached the depth of the immortal words of Moses. In a dignified manner the ancient man of God unfolds the humbling truths relating to the finite nature of man. With a sacred restraint and yet with bold directness Moses points to our sin and guilt as the cause of our human frailty. At the same time he directs our attention to the immutable God as the fountain of supreme comfort. In the light of our ill-desert and human frailty; only one source of relief does fully satisfy: the infinite mercy of God in Christ. It lightens our burdens and tenderly heals our wounded hearts.

“We spend our years as a tale is told.” These years are ours. Nevertheless, they do not belong to us in the sense that we have a right to them. Each year and even every day is a personal gift from God.

Our years are private possessions. In this regard they are just like our home, our family, like our father and our mother: they belong to us in a very intimate way. They are our treasures and closely related to our joys and hopes. These valuable years are given to us, so that we may seek and find joy and fulfillment. True joy and peace may only be found in God and Christ.

When we humble ourselves at the throne of God's mercy, we find help in the time of our need. We never experience a deeper satisfaction.

Our years are like a gold mine filled with precious treasures. At the same time they are like a swiftly flowing stream. When they are past, they are gone for ever. The length of the number of our years varies from person to person. Some of us become old and other die in their youth. Our years are our seedtime, to be used in plowing and sowing for the harvest of eternity. Therefore we must utilize our years with a prayerful concern. All that we can do for our immortal souls must be done in the brief space of time that intervenes between the cradle and the grave.

We have a sacred responsibility regarding these priceless treasures of our years. We have to give an account for every period of time that is given to us. The manner in which we spend our time is recorded in the book of God's remembrance. Our years are ours so that we may seek the rest, joy and pardon that are in Christ.

In the light of this, the solemn inquiry is: How do we spend our years?

Moses answers, ‘we spend our years as a tale is told.’ How brief, how fleeting is our life! It is like a tale, a story that is quickly told. In our youth we may be looking forward to life. Then, and it seems only a little later, we awake from our dream, and discover that our life is almost spent. Somehow our years speed away surprisingly fast. Once our years have disappeared, it is impossible to recall them. This should lead us to careful self-examination. God has spared us for a purpose, but do we use our time as the Lord requires?

At the beginning of this year a wide door opportunities is still open before us. We may receive spiritual instruction in God's house and at home. God's children may seek to grow in

knowledge and grace. There are rich occasions for prayer and meditation, for self-examination and self-correction. To the unconverted, there is the precious call to repentance before the door is shut. To our youth comes the loving and urgent invitation, "My son, [my daughter,] give me thine heart" (Proverbs 23:26).

When eternity comes, time shall be no more. It is well to reckon with that now. Sooner or later our life will come to an end. Then we will fully know the matchless value of the day of grace. As we spend time, so shall we spend eternity. If we live our present life in the darkness of sin and unbelief, then our life in the hereafter shall be one of darkness. That darkness will be much deeper. It will never end! As long as time is permitted to us, the darkness of sin can still be driven away by the special grace and power of the Light of the World.

None uses his time more wisely than those who utilize it for their own spiritual interests and that of others. They plead along with the psalmist, "So teach unto number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom" (Psalm 90: 12).

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Mysterious Federal Reserve

I find it interesting that not a single mainstream presidential candidate from either party so much as mentions the Federal Reserve. Yet, the Federal Reserve has absolute control over our nation's money and economy.

How can something so central to every American's well being be totally omitted from discussion? Since it is impossible for anyone with qualifications to hold the office of president not to know about the Federal Reserve, we can only conclude they have been told it is off limits. Why?

There is a very good reason: The Federal Reserve is a private corporation whose controlling stock is held by Chase Manhattan and Morgan/Rockefeller interests.

I remember when practicing law stumbling across appellate cases where someone sued the federal government for injuries received by agents or employees of the Federal Reserve, only to be told that his organization is not part of the government. Surprise!

But what is a private corporation doing controlling our nation's money, credit, and economy? Why would any nation commit so much power to private interests, particularly when banks have repeatedly prove to be among the most corrupt and self serving institutions in our nation, bilking taxpayers for hundreds of billions of dollars in bad loans? Remember the banking and saving a loan scandals of the Reagan ear? Taxpayers were forced to pick up something like \$500 billion in bad loans. If I remember correctly, it was this crisis that first caused Congress to raid Social Security. Now, here we are again with the housing mortgage crisis. And these are the same men controlling the most powerful institution in our nation, if not the world!

The Federal Reserve is not the first central bank our nation has been saddled with. The bankers have always attempted to control our nation's money and credit to their own advantage. Jefferson said, "I fear banking institutions more than standing armies." He also said, "If the American people ever allow private banks to control the issue of their currency, first by inflation, then by deflation, the banks...will deprive the people of all property until their children wake up homeless on the continent their fathers conquered."

So, you see, the banks' schemes are nothing new. Andrew Jackson closed the second central bank. The Federal Reserve is the third.

Now you know why no one talks about the Federal Reserve. Don't you think its time that changed?

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