

CONTINUITY OF SCRIPTURE

Week 3 - ...Resurrection – Differing Views Re: OT Expectations – Pt. 3

May 18, 2025

How do believers frequently explain heaven? Spiritual? Mystical? Cannot grasp heaven???

We need to know that this version of heaven has more to do with Greek philosophy/Gnosticism. Greek philosophy was prevalent during the intertestamental time between the OT and NT – when Greece was a powerful empire.

Gnosticism taught – and still teaches since many belief systems adhere to Gnostic thought - spirit is good; matter is bad. And so our soul lives on but we don't live on in any bodily form. Disembodied forever!?

Re: matter/material things being understood as evil - ??

CONSIDER: Gen. 1:1 – God created the heavens and the earth! A material, physical earth...and how many physical planets and stars are we seeing in the night sky?

CONSIDER: What did Jesus tell His disciples at their Passover Seder the night before His crucifixion? John 14:1-2 - *Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. ²In My Father's house are many mansions (dwelling)s; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.*

WHY are there differing views within the Church?

As we study the Bible we need to understand it LITERALLY. The biblical text is to be interpreted according to the “plain meaning” conveyed by its grammatical construction and historical context. “Context” is CRUCIAL in our study of the Bible.

Understanding context begins with three principles: 1) literal meaning (what it says); 2) historical setting (the events of the story, to whom it is addressed, and how it was understood AT THAT TIME; and 3) synthesis (comparing it with other parts of Scripture; cross referencing)

OT Expectation – the OT clearly teaches salvation and restoration of the nation of Israel in an earthly, physical kingdom of God under the Messiah Jesus with land and physical blessings for Israel as the basis for bringing blessings to the nations – the GENTILES (Gen. 12:3; Gen. 18:18).

Two differing views:

View #1: NT **Literal** Fulfillment of the OT Expectation:

- With the coming of Jesus, the expectation of the OT is literally maintained. What was prophesied in the OT – word for word – read in the plain sense of the word – WILL OCCUR!
 - And so, the coming of Jesus means the literal fulfillment of the OT expectations. Since there are two physical comings of Jesus, certain OT promises are fulfilled with Jesus' first coming (Luke 4:16-19). The promises that will be fulfilled at the second coming of Jesus IN THE FUTURE - include many of the national and physical promises to Israel, along with creation's restoration (Isa. 11; Isa. 65:17-25). SO...what does this mean re: Israel? Israel continues to exist as a nation/an ethnic people group! Cross reference using Isa. 66:22:

○ Isa. 66:22 - *For as the new heavens and the new earth which I will make shall remain before Me, 'says the Lord, 'So shall your descendants and your name remain.'*

View #2: NT Reinterpretation/Transcending (Surpassing) Fulfillment of the OT Expectation:
(More and more teachers and pastors in the Church are teaching...)

- ...w\ the coming of Jesus, the expectation of the OT is fulfilled in Jesus as He absorbs, transcends/surpasses, to go beyond, alters the trajectory (God's plan/path) of the OT expectations!
- Jesus and the Church are the true Israel and national, physical, and land promises are fulfilled spiritually in Jesus and/or the Church, NOT in the nation of Israel.

George Eldon Ladd (1911-1982 - Baptist Pastor and Professor of New Testament Theology at Fuller Theological Seminary) has stated that he and others like him "...form their theology from the explicit teaching of the NT and not from the OT. They confess that they cannot be sure how the OT prophecies of the end are to be fulfilled for the first coming of Christ was accomplished in terms not foreseen by a literal interpretation of the OT and there are unavoidable indications that the OT promises to Israel are fulfilled in the Christian church." "Historic Premillennialism" in *The Meaning of the Millennium: Four Views* (InterVarsity Press, 1977), p. 27.

Ladd also stated that "The OT must be interpreted by the NT. ...it is quite possible that the prophecies addressed originally to literal Israel describing physical blessings have their fulfillment exclusively in the spiritual blessings enjoyed in the church. It is also possible that the OT expectation of a kingdom on earth could be reinterpreted by the NT altogether of blessings in the spiritual realm." "Revelation 20 and the Millennium," *Review and Expositor* 57 (1960), p. 167.

NT Wright has stated, "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 a new content that, as we have seen, he powerfully subverted (overthrew) Jewish expectations." N.T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, p. 471.

God authored the OT. We read the OT with "authorial intent" – with God's intent – that is how we are to read Scripture! Jesus is God the Son! Was GOD not adamant in what He proclaimed in the Hebrew Scriptures?

How did View #2 get into the picture and why is it now thriving?

- First 200 years of the Church the OT expectations laid out in the OT were believed!
- Origen (185-254) highlighted the allegorical hermeneutic (spiritualizing the text) way of studying/interpreting the Bible.
- In 196 AD at a council in Caesarea – it was decided that Resurrection Day would be celebrated on a Sunday each year during the Feast of Eshtar – a Persian goddess – from which we derive the name Easter.
- The Jewish believers were not represented on the council. In hearing about the "vote" – their response was, "God gave us the date for Passover and Jesus rose on the third day of Passover. How can you change this date?"
- By 306-337 – Constantine had established his own Empire and Israel was out of the picture.

- Next the Gentiles rejected Passover. In 325 AD there was an official proclamation – Resurrection Day was to be observed on Easter Sunday by all believers.
- A few years later at a council in Antioch – it was decided that anyone attempting to celebrate the Passover on the 17th day of Nisan was to be excommunicated.

3

- Augustine – end of 300 into 400 – “The City of God” – totally spiritualized. The universe was “killed.” No more plants, animals or humans. Empyrian heaven – heaven of light – apart from the universe. Residing in God’s presence. Dante’s work on hell – “The Inferno” – part of his “Divine Comedy” – enhanced the popularity of Augustine’s Empyrian heaven.
- As Jewish believers were scattered – they began taking the Gospel to Gentiles. More and more Gentiles were becoming believers in Jesus.
- Without a background in Jewish history and Jewish life – the Gentiles didn’t understand why the Jewish believers wanted to continue to do the things they’d always done, i.e. Passover, the Feast of Tabernacles, etc.
- One of the major controversies concerned Resurrection Day.
- Jewish believers insisted on celebrating Resurrection Day on the 3rd day of Passover – the 17th day of Nisan – but this was according to the Jewish calendar. The rest of the world wasn’t following that calendar. So, the 17th day of Nisan – nixed. It wasn’t meaningful to the Gentiles.
- Remember – the seat of belief had moved to Rome.
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- In the late 1800’s the Scofield Reference Bible motivated an interest in Israel through reading the text literally and understanding the Bible’s unfolding – God’s unfolding His plan for Israel, for the Church, and for the nations.