

The Abrahamic Covenant

By Tim Warner (02/16/09)
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Introduction

I would like to begin by thanking Bro. Norm Fields for agreeing to debate the very important topic of the Christian's hope. That "hope" is summed up in the proposition I will be defending in this debate.

"The Christian's hope is not heaven, but the return of Christ to reign over the nations upon the Throne of David in Jerusalem, and to renovate this earth as the permanent inheritance of Jesus Christ and all who are in Him."

I intend to prove the above proposition, from Scripture, beyond a shadow of doubt. I intend to expose the amillennial eschatological system for what it is, a blending of Christianity with ancient pagan Greek philosophy and Gnosticism.

Amillennialism was not the eschatology of the earliest Christians. It is amazing to me that the Churches of Christ (from which my opponent comes) are so committed to this later human innovation, while loathing the eschatology that was held by the Christian writers who had close linkage to the Apostles. Yet they claim affinity with the primitive Apostolic Church. They have adopted the eschatology of the Reformers – the fathers of the "denominations" – as opposed to the eschatology of pristine, Apostolic Christianity. The historical record shows clearly that the earliest Christians taught "chiliasm" (the Greek word for "millennialism"). Amillennialism developed later, as the Scriptures were increasingly viewed through the Greek philosophical lens, and the Jewish flavor of the Apostles' teaching grew dim with time.

The amillennial hope of heaven, with the complete demolition of this creation at Jesus' return, is not derived from a proper handling of Scripture, but from interpreting the New Testament in a vacuum (apart from the Old Testament promises), and viewing certain New Testament passages from a Greek philosophical mindset. The amillennial hope is certainly not the hope described by New Testament writers. It is foreign to Scripture, to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to the earliest Christian writers who had links to the Apostles. It is therefore a **false hope** that will be realized by no one.

Methodology

As the reader will quickly observe, “chiliasm” is built from a progressive understanding of Divine revelation. Each new revelation builds on past revelation, and is understood in light of past revelation. New Testament revelation never contradicts Old Testament revelation, but always compliments it, adding details, clarifying what is obscure, and explaining the purposes behind God’s former dealings. With amillennialism, the interpretation of the New Testament disregards and contradicts Old Testament prophecy at every turn. All difficulties with Old Testament revelation are explained away as allegory. This approach, however, presents a very serious paradox, because the Old Testament saints believed and acted upon the promises as though they were meant literally. Consequently, the faithful saints of Hebrews 11 who believed God actually believed all the wrong things, if amillennialism is true. As you judge this debate, your primary concern ought to be whether each side is able to present an eschatology that is harmonious with both Testaments, while doing violence to neither.

The Christian’s Hope in the New Testament

In this first round, I will seek to prove the last part of the propositional statement, that the Christian’s true “hope” is our Lord’s coming “*to renovate this earth as the permanent inheritance of Jesus Christ and all who are in Him.*” The word “hope” is a critical one. It describes more than merely an expectation, or knowledge of the future. Rather, “hope” implies a longing desire and patient waiting for the realization of our promised inheritance. It is the “pearl of great price” for which one is willing to sell everything.

Amillennial teaching demands that the hope of the Jewish people, the coming of the Messiah to restore Israel, Jerusalem, and the whole earth, was a misplaced (carnal) hope. That hope was based on a literal reading of the Old Testament promises. In the closing remarks of his second sermon, Peter confirmed the Jewish hope, based on the Old Testament prophetic Scriptures, just as the Jews understood it.

Acts 3:19-22 NKJV

*19 Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so **that times of refreshing** may come from the presence of the Lord, 20 and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, 21 whom heaven must receive until **the times of restoration of all things**, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.*

Peter did not preach a hope of heaven to this Jewish audience, whose expectation was the literal fulfillment of all of the Old Testament prophecies to restore Israel, Jerusalem, and the whole earth (cf. Isaiah 65-66, Zechariah 14). He confirmed their current hope, based on a literal reading of the Old Testament prophets.

The Apostle Paul summarized the essence of the Gentile believer's hope. It was in perfect agreement with Peter's expectation, which was itself based on Jesus' teaching.

Romans 8:16-25 NKJV

*16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then **heirs — heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ**, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.*

*18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. 19 For the earnest expectation of **the creation eagerly waits** for the revealing of the sons of God. 20 **For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope;** 21 **because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption** into the glorious liberty of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. 23 Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. 24 **For we were saved in this hope**, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? 25 But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance.*

The specific "hope" defined by Paul was the lifting of the curse from the "whole creation." In this passage, **the resurrection of the body is inseparably linked to the restoration of this cursed earth**. The whole creation is now "groaning" under the weight of the curse that came about as a result of man's sin. But, the creation was subjected to the curse "in hope." And one day the creation will be "delivered from the bondage of corruption." And then it will be the inheritance of Jesus Christ and His "joint heirs." It is clear this had not yet occurred in Paul's day, because he went on to link it to the resurrection of believers, and to say that Christians patiently "wait for it with perseverance." The Apostle also indicated that "we were saved in **this hope**." That is, the hope of the **restoration of the creation**, and it's becoming the inheritance of Jesus and all who are in Him at the resurrection of the just. This is the "hope" of the true Gospel of Jesus Christ, and the one passed down by the Apostles to the early Church. Irenaeus, (disciple of Polycarp, disciple of John), explains as follows:

*"The predicted blessing, therefore, belongs unquestionably to the times of the kingdom, **when the righteous shall bear rule upon their rising from the dead; when also the creation, having been renovated and set free**, shall fructify with an abundance of all kinds of food, from the dew of heaven, and from the fertility of the earth: **as the elders who saw John, the disciple of the Lord, related that they had heard from him how the Lord used to teach in regard to these times,...**"¹*

[I]t behooves the righteous first to receive the promise of the inheritance which God promised to the fathers, and to reign in it, when they rise again to behold God **in this creation which is renovated**, and that the judgment should take place afterwards. For it is just that **in that very creation** in which they toiled or were afflicted, being proved in every way by suffering, they should receive the reward of their suffering; and that **in the creation** in which they were slain because of their love to God, **in that** they should be revived again; and that **in the creation** in which they endured servitude, **in that they should reign**. For God is rich in all things, and all things are His. It is fitting, therefore, that **the creation itself, being restored to its primeval condition**, should without restraint be under the dominion of the righteous; and the apostle has made this plain in the Epistle to the Romans, when he thus speaks: "For the expectation of the creation waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creation has been subjected to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope; since the creation itself shall also be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God."²

The Basis for "This Hope" – The Promises to Abraham

In the following passage, Paul revealed precisely the same "hope" and explained **the real foundation** for it. It is rooted in the land promise that God gave to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, which still remains unfulfilled.

Hebrews 11:8-10 NKJV

8 By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.

9 By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; ...

13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the [land].³...

39 And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise,

40 God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.

According to this passage, it was the land inheritance promise that Abraham believed literally, not as an allegory of heaven. He acted upon it in faith. Yet, he did not receive the fulfillment of that promise. Neither did his son, Isaac, or his grandson, Jacob. The above passage tells us plainly that this very promise was not realized by Abraham in his lifetime, but will be in the future when all of Abraham's seed will inherit that hope together, "us" being included.

Acts 7:2-6 KJV ⁴

2 And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran,

3 And said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into ***the land which I shall shew thee.***

4 Then came he out of the land of the Chaldaeans, and dwelt in Charran: and from thence, when his father was dead, he removed him into ***this land, wherein ye now dwell.***

5 And **he gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on: yet he promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him,** when as yet he had no child.

Look carefully at Stephen's words above, and their implication. God "**gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on.**" However, God "**promised that he would give it to him for a possession.**" There are only two possible conclusions from this statement. Either God lied to Abraham, or the promise will be fulfilled in the future.

Of course, some amillennialists propose a third option, that God did not mean it literally, but it was an allegory of heaven. But, such an interpretation makes Abraham out to be a fool. He left his home to go live in the promised land in a tent, as a foreigner, because he was waiting for the promise to be fulfilled, that God would give him that very land in which he lived as an everlasting inheritance.

Paul went on to inform us that Abraham's hope is our "hope," our "*anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast.*"

Hebrews 6:13-20 NASB

13 For when **God made the promise to Abraham,** since He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, 14 saying, "I will surely bless you and I will surely multiply you." 15 And so, having patiently waited, he obtained the promise. 16 For men swear by one greater than themselves, and with them an oath given as confirmation is an end of every dispute. 17 In the same way God, desiring even more to show **to the heirs of the promise** the unchangeableness of His purpose, interposed with an oath, 18 so that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, **we who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us.** 19 **This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil,**

"This hope" of the Christian is defined as the Abrahamic Covenant. The "oath" God swore to Abraham after he proved his faith by offering Isaac, reaffirms all of the former promises God made to Abraham, including the eternal land inheritance.

Genesis 22:15-18 KJV⁴

15 And the angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, 16 And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: 17 That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; **and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies;** 18 And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.

We know from Galatians 3:26-29 that all who have been baptized into Christ are “Abraham’s seed, and **heirs according to the promise.**” So, “your descendants” in this oath must include all who are in Christ. It is not limited to the Jewish nation, or physical descendants of Jacob. The “oath” sworn by God to Abraham above is currently being fulfilled, as people are being baptized into Christ. However, the last part, that Abraham’s seed shall possess the gates of their enemies, remains unfulfilled.

Paul stated plainly that the promise to Abraham, confirmed by this oath, is “*the hope set before us*” and “*our anchor of the soul.*” This is the rest of the Abrahamic Covenant that still awaits fulfillment, which is **the everlasting land inheritance.** As in Romans 8, “this hope” provides perseverance, (as the metaphor, “*our anchor of the soul,*” indicates).

Irenaeus, explained the oral tradition handed down by John regarding the foundation of our “hope.” It is **the eternal land inheritance** promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

*“Thus, then, the promise of God, which He gave to Abraham, remains steadfast. For thus He said: ‘Lift up thine eyes, and look from this place where now thou art, towards the north and south, and east and west. For all the earth which thou seest, **I will give to thee** and to thy seed, **even for ever.**’ And again He says, ‘Arise, and go through the length and breadth of the land, since **I will give it unto thee;**’ and [yet] he did not receive an inheritance in it, not even a footstep, but was always a stranger and a pilgrim therein. And upon the death of Sarah his wife, when the Hittites were willing to bestow upon him a place where he might bury her, he declined it as a gift, but bought the burying-place (giving for it four hundred talents of silver) from Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite. **Thus did he await patiently the promise of God,** and was unwilling to appear to receive from men, what God had promised to give him, when He said again to him as follows: ‘I will give this land to thy seed, from the river of Egypt even unto the great river Euphrates.’ If, then, **God promised him the inheritance of the land, yet he did not receive it during all the time of his sojourn there, it must be, that together with his seed, that is, those who fear God and believe in Him, he shall receive it at the resurrection of the just.”**⁵*

The foundation of “chiliasm” (historic premillennialism) is the “faith of Abraham” – believing exactly what God promised – and rejecting the early influence Gnosticism that colored later interpretations of Scripture concocted by Origen and Augustine, who envisioned a heavenly destiny for believers, borrowed from Gnosticism.

Irenaeus, outlined the real basis for the early Christians’ belief in “chiliasm” – the restoration of the creation at Christ’s second coming and the believers’ inheritance within it. The land promise given to Abraham by God has yet to be realized by Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, **personally**. It is true that some of Abraham’s descendants took possession of the land temporarily, under Joshua. But Irenaeus’ major point was that the land inheritance concerned not only future generations of Abraham’s seed, **but was promised to Abraham personally, as his own eternal inheritance.** A quick scan of Genesis proves Irenaeus was correct.

Gen 13:14-17 KJV⁴

14 And the LORD said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward:

*15 For **all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever.***

16 And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered.

*17 Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for **I will give it unto thee.***

Gen 17:7-8 KJV⁴

7 And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.

*8 And **I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.***

The same land promise was repeated to Abraham’s son, Isaac, who also lived in that land as a foreigner, without receiving the promise in his lifetime.

Gen 26:2-5 KJV⁴

2 And the LORD appeared unto him, and said, Go not down into Egypt; dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of:

*3 Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee; **for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I swear unto Abraham thy father;***

4 And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed;
5 Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.

The same promise was repeated to Jacob, Abraham's grandson, who also lived there as a foreigner, never seeing the fulfillment of the promise in his lifetime.

Gen 35:10-12 KJV ⁴

10 And God said unto him, Thy name is Jacob: thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name: and he called his name Israel.
11 And God said unto him, I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins;
12 And the land which I gave Abraham and Isaac, **to thee I will give it**, and to thy seed after thee will I give the land.

Did Abraham believe these promises literally or figuratively? Was the promised eternal inheritance that very land in which he lived? Or was it an allegory of heaven, as claimed by amillennialists? The text settles this question decisively.

Gen 12:1-7 KJV ⁴

1 Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, **unto a land that I will shew thee**:
2 And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing:
3 And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.
4 So **Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him**; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran.
5 And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; **and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came**.
6 And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Sichem, unto the plain of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land.
7 And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, **Unto thy seed will I give this land**: and there builded he an altar unto the LORD, who appeared unto him.

Here we have the very first act of faith on Abraham's part. It involved traveling to an unknown place. The everlasting land promise was the very first thing upon which Abraham acted in faith. Once he arrived in the land, God reiterated His promise.

Gen 13:14-17 KJV⁴

14 And the LORD said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward:

15 For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever.

16 And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered.

17 Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee.

The Apostle Paul informs us that the eternal land inheritance promised to Abraham and his seed is to be realized, through Christ, by all those who have become "Abraham's seed" by being baptized into Jesus Christ.

Galatians 3:16-18, 26-29 NKJV

16 Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, "And to seeds," as of many, but as of one, "And to your Seed," who is Christ. 17 And this I say, that the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, **cannot annul the covenant** that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect. 18 For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no longer of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise.

19 What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made ...

"The inheritance" mentioned by Paul here is clearly the eternal land inheritance. It is the only "inheritance" mentioned in the Abrahamic Covenant. Yet, Paul stated plainly that Abraham's seed **could NOT** receive this inheritance through the Law (which is exactly the reverse of what amillennialists claim). Nor could their breaking of the Law "annul" the promise! The Law was only an intermediary step in God's plan, to preserve Israel until the "promised seed" would come, who is Christ. He is the "seed" (singular) who will take permanent possession of "the inheritance" promised to Abraham and his "seed" (singular). Paul explained that all who are baptized into Jesus Christ therefore become "Abraham's seed" and the heirs of "the inheritance," because we are in Christ.

26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

The term “the inheritance” refers to the eternal land inheritance. The “seed” to whom “the inheritance” was promised (along with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) was Christ. And all who are baptized into Him are therefore “*heirs according to the promise.*” Or, as Paul put it in Romans 8:17, we are “*joint heirs with Jesus Christ.*” (See also: Heb. 1:2).

Even the saints of the Old Testament receive the **eternal land inheritance** through Christ alone, not merely because they are the physical descendants of Abraham.

Hebrews 9:15 NKJV

*15 And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, **that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.***

If these promises are to be understood allegorically, referring to heaven, it makes Abraham out to be a fool, acting as though God meant them literally by leaving his home and living in the “promised land” in a tent!

The Prophets

The hope of Israel is also the hope of the true Church of Christ. It is based on the normal reading of the Abrahamic Covenant, and all of the Old Testament prophecies. For the sake of brevity, I will offer just one in this opening round of the debate.

Psalms 37

3 Trust in the LORD, and do good; Dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness. ...

*9 For evildoers shall be cut off; **But those who wait on the LORD, They shall inherit the earth.***

10 For yet a little while and the wicked shall be no more; Indeed, you will look carefully for his place, But it shall be no more.

*11 **But the meek shall inherit the earth,** And shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace. ...*

*18 The LORD knows the days of the upright, And **their inheritance shall be forever.***

*22 **For those blessed by Him shall inherit the earth,** But those cursed by Him shall be cut off. ...*

*27 Depart from evil, and do good; **And dwell forevermore.***

28 For the LORD loves justice, And does not forsake His saints; They are preserved forever, But the descendants of the wicked shall be cut off.

*29 **The righteous shall inherit the land, And dwell in it forever.***

*34 Wait on the LORD, And keep His way, And **He shall exalt you to inherit the land;** When the wicked are cut off, you shall see it.*

This prophecy of David's is clearly based on the land promise of the Abrahamic Covenant. David placed its fulfillment in the future, even though when he wrote it Israel was living in the land. David did not consider their present dwelling in the land the ultimate fulfillment of "the inheritance" promised to Abraham, as is proven by his constantly placing "the inheritance" in the future, when the wicked are "cut off." This is because, as Paul explained, the eternal inheritance does not come through the Law. All of the Old Testament prophecies which deal with the restoration of the earth, the land of Israel, and Jerusalem, are rooted in the Abrahamic Covenant, and are future. Notice, Jesus Himself quoted verse 11 in His Sermon on the Mount, as a promise to His disciples, "*Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth,*" (Matt. 5:5). Jesus did not overthrow the Jewish "hope," He reinforced it. (see also Acts 1:4-8).

The Jews' mistake was not to wrongly take the Abrahamic Covenant and Old Testament prophecies literally. They were quite correct in doing so. Their mistake was to suppose that all this was to come about at the first coming of the Messiah. They did not understand, from such passages as Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53, that the Messiah must die to redeem them to God before "the restoration of all things" would be possible. Nor did they understand the "seed" of promise was Christ, and that Jew and Gentile must enter into the Abrahamic Covenant through Christ alone, rather than physical descent.

A Final Warning

Earlier in this paper I pointed out (from Romans 8:24) that "this hope" was the **only** hope in which Christians were saved. Everything else is therefore a perversion. It was the faith of Abraham, demonstrated by his acting on the promises literally, that was held up as the **only** saving faith. Only those "*who walk in the steps of the faith of Abraham*" are "Abraham's seed," (Rom. 4:12).

Galatians 3:5-9 NKJV

*6 just as Abraham "believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." 7 Therefore know that **only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham.** 8 And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, "In you all the nations shall be blessed." 9 So then **those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.***

Having "faith" in any object we choose will not do! Twisting the promises of God, interpreting them allegorically, mystically, or contrary to the Old Testament Jewish background, **is not faith but unbelief.** Only those who have the faith of Abraham are "Abraham's seed." Abraham took God's promises literally, as is clearly proven by his actions. He acted on God's promise in faith, by leaving his people and **dwelling in the land of promise as a foreigner.**

Just because it says “church of Christ” on the sign outside does not make that congregation a genuine “church of Christ.” To be genuinely a “church of Christ,” one must follow the true Christ, in doctrine and in character. Likewise, to be “*Abraham’s seed and heirs according to the promise,*” you must have the same faith that Abraham had, which was evident from his actions. “*Jesus said to them, ‘If you were Abraham’s children, you would do the works of Abraham’*,” (John 8:39-40).

In closing, I must state plainly that I am **not** saying that amillennialists are unsaved. I am not the judge of anyone’s salvation. God searches the heart, and He alone saves. Just how much perversion of His Gospel He will tolerate, and still save, is up to Him. I tend to view God as tolerant of our weaknesses and misunderstandings, and eager to save those with repentant hearts who seek after Him, even if they make some serious doctrinal mistakes. This is why I addressed my opponent as “brother Norm Fields” in my opening statement, giving him the benefit of the doubt. However, those of you who portray God as intolerant of doctrinal errors, be warned. “*Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.*” (Matt 7:1-3).

Zech. 2:10-13 NKJV

10 “Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion! For behold, I am coming and I will dwell in your midst,” says the LORD. 11 “Many nations shall be joined to the LORD in that day, and they shall become My people. And I will dwell in your midst. Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent Me to you. 12 And the LORD will take possession of Judah as His inheritance in the Holy Land, and will again choose Jerusalem. 13 Be silent, all flesh, before the LORD, for He is aroused from His holy habitation!”

Notes:

1. Irenaeus, Against Heresies, Book V, xxxiii
2. Irenaeus, Against Heresies, Book V, xxxii
3. Most translations read “earth.” The Greek word means “land” or “ground.” It does not refer to planet “earth.” The concept of our living on a planet did not exist in biblical times. Nor was such a planet named “earth.” The “earth” (or land) in Scripture is defined for us clearly in Genesis 1:8-10. “*And God called the firmament Heaven. So the evening and the morning were the second day. Then God said, “Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear”; and it was so. 10 And God called the dry land Earth, and the gathering together of the waters He called Seas. And God saw that it was good.*” We see here that there are three components to our world, “heaven” (atmosphere), “earth” (dry land), and “seas” (oceans). Everywhere in Scripture that mentions the “earth,” this meaning is in view. That is, the “dry land,” as opposed to the “heavens” (sky) and the “seas.” It may refer to a specific “land” (like Israel), or all of the dry land. But it never refers to the whole planet “earth” (including the atmosphere and oceans) in Scripture.
4. I found it necessary to use the KJV in all these quotations. The NKJV, NASB, NIV (and many other modern versions) in translating “seed” (singular) as “descendants” (plural), create a conflict with Paul’s explanation of the Abrahamic promise in Galatians 3:16. Paul pointed out that the promised “seed” is **grammatically singular** (pointing to one of Abraham’s descendants - Christ) as opposed to “seeds,” plural (referring to all of his physical descendants). Paul was correct. In both the Hebrew and the LXX, the term is “seed” (singular) in all of the promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In both the LXX and Galatians, the Greek term is “sperma.”
5. Irenaeus, Against Heresies, Book V, xxxii