

## Response to Rebuttal “The Abrahamic Covenant”

By Tim Warner (03/16/09)

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Let me dispense quickly with a couple of issues that perhaps I did not make clear.

Fields: “It seems clear from the proposition statement that Mr. Warner is saying Jesus will enter into his reign upon the occurrence of his second coming. At this point I must ask Mr. Warner to clarify his position. Does he mean to say that Jesus is not now reigning but will begin to reign when he comes again? Is Christ currently the King of kings and Lord of lords or is he coming to take his place as King of kings and Lord of lords? His answers here would be very much appreciated.”

My position is that Jesus is currently reigning only over those who have made Him their Lord and King by their own free choice, those who have obeyed the Gospel and are currently obeying the commandments of Jesus. He is not yet reigning over the nations, which reject His authority. Christ’s Kingdom is present now in the churches. But, it is limited in its scope. Satan’s kingdom also exists on the earth, and most are under his dominion (Matt. 12:26; 2 Cor. 4:4; Rev. 12:9). God’s will is NOT yet being done “*on earth as it is in heaven.*” In heaven, all are under total submission. On earth, only some believers are in submission. Jesus is not “King of kings” yet, since most “kings” do not submit to Him, but to Satan. He is not “Lord of lords” yet, because most “lords” refuse Him. At His second coming, Jesus will overthrow these rebellious “kings” and “lords” and set up His own followers to reign with Him “with a rod of iron” (Rev. 2:26-27; Rev. 12:5; Rev. 19:15), so that all the nations will submit to Him and His authority. Only then can it be said: “*the kingdom of this world has become the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ*” (Rev. 11:15). The faithful churches constitute a limited manifestation of Christ’s Kingdom now. The universal manifestation is still future.

Fields: “Thus, the throne, symbol of sovereign authority, of David, symbolic for the authorized ruler of God’s people. Unless Mr. Warner is actually referring to

the literal chair that the literal historic person named David literally sat upon when he ruled God's people. I will let him clarify if that is indeed the case."

I am using the term "throne of David" as it was used throughout the Old Testament, the kingly reign of David and his descendants **over the twelve tribes of Israel in the promised land, from Jerusalem.** It involves a specific people (the 12 tribes of Israel) and a specific land (the promised land). *"May God do so to Abner, and more also, if I do not do for **David as the LORD has sworn to him** — to transfer the kingdom from the house of Saul, and set up **the throne of David over Israel and over Judah, from Dan to Beersheba.**"* (2 Sam 3:9-10 NKJV).

Fields: "My opponent has thanked me for agreeing to debate "the very important topic of the Christian's hope." However, if you look at the heading for what we are actually debating it is stated, "Premillennialism (Chiliasm) vs. Amillennialism." From this we can conclude that Mr. Warner believes the tenets of the Premillennialism doctrine to be the Christian's hope. He says that this hope is "summed up" in the proposition statement. However, the proposition statement says nothing of "millennium," one thousand, or of what happens before, "pre," the one thousand year reign of Christ on earth "millennium"."

The proposition, which Bro Fields agreed to debate, is quite clear and needs no parsing. While the debate is styled "Premillennialism (chiliasm) vs. Amillennialism," the specific topic of discussion is narrowed considerably by the proposition that I am defending, and Bro. Fields has agreed to challenge. The proposition is only one aspect in dispute between **some** premillennialists and amillennialists. And my intention was to limit the debate to that propositional statement. I am not defending "premillennialism" generally, because there are some forms of premillennialism with which I disagree on key issues (particularly with dispensationalists). In fact, dispensationalists have adopted one key presupposition of amillennialism, that of a "heavenly destiny" for Christians. And this is the main cause of their error. The debate proposition is as contrary to the dispensational form of premillennialism as it is to amillennialism, regarding the alleged "heavenly destiny" for Christians. This is why the term "chiliasm" was included in the title, to distinguish it from the modern form of premillennialism – dispensationalism. ("Chiliasm" is the title for the premillennialism held by the early Christian writers, Papias, Barnabas, Justin, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Hippolytus, and Lactantius.)

With regard to the thousand years of Revelation 20, I am "premillennial." The thousand years are literal, and will commence after the second coming of Christ. The "millennium," however, is not synonymous with the "Kingdom of God." The Kingdom of God is eternal, the millennium is not. The millennium is simply a specified period of

time between the first resurrection, which occurs at Jesus' second coming, and the resurrection of the "rest of the dead" and final judgment. Consequently, the term "Millennial Kingdom" is a misnomer, unless one intends to refer to only one aspect of Christ's Kingdom.

Fields: "Am I to understand that the reign of Christ over the nations will be for one thousand years, a "millennium," and then, after this millennial reign, Christ will "renovate this earth" as the Christian's eternal abode? Or, am I (and the reader) to understand that the "renovation" will take place upon the return of Christ and his reign "over the nations" will be in this "renovated earth"? I believe Mr. Warner's clarification here would help us to understand the "eschatology" he is asking us to except [*sic*] as biblical truth."

The "renovation" referred to in the debate proposition takes place in stages. In one sense, the reconciliation of people to God through the Gospel is the beginning of the "restoration" of the creation (certain humans). However, God's intent is the complete restoration of the whole creation, free from the effects of man's sin and rebellion. The specific aspect of "restoration" referred to in the propositional statement will begin with the events surrounding Christ's second coming (the judgments of Revelation are precursor to restoration, just as a farmer may burn a field before it is planted). When Jesus returns the land of Israel will be purged by fire, (Isa. 66:15-24; Joel 2:1-11; Mal. 4:1-3; 2 Pet. 3:10). The final stage will be at the close of the millennium, when Satan's defeat will be total, no unconverted people will remain, and death itself will be abolished.

### **Our Authority**

Bro. Fields seems to object to my use of the early Christian writings, in particular, my quoting Irenaeus. I will state plainly that the writings of the early Christian apologists are not "authoritative" in the sense that the Scriptures are authoritative. The Apostles were kept from all error in their written works. This cannot be said of their disciples. However, these writings are a testament to the way the early Christians understood the oral teaching of their mentors, the Apostles. While being subject to occasional errors, they provide strong uniform evidence that our view is historic, being dated contiguous with the time of John at the latest. My use of them is not to prove some point merely because Justin, Irenaeus, or Hippolytus said so. Rather, it is only to reveal to the reader that the main points I am making are consistent with the earliest known Christian tradition, and not of my own "private interpretation." The astute reader already knows this, because when I quoted Irenaeus, I took the reader back to the Scriptures to show that Irenaeus was correct in his observations of Scripture. The Scriptures provide the authority. Irenaeus was consistent with them, taking them literally. The early church writings provide the historical connection between our view and that of the Apostles.

It is not only a question of “authority” that is at stake here. Every true and every false teaching has a source. Tracing any teaching to its source is an historical exercise, not a theological one. Establishing historical “facts” does not take divine revelation, but historical research. The source of a particular teaching is very important given what Jesus said about false prophets: *“Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit.”* (Matt 7:16-19 NKJV). The men being quoted were “approved,” having been given the responsibility of leadership in various churches founded by the Apostles, and having been considered faithful witnesses to the oral teaching of the Apostles. These are hardly “thornbushes” or “thistles.” Rather, they ought to be considered “faithful men” (not perfect men) through whom the Apostolic tradition was entrusted. *“And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”* (2 Tim 2:1-3 NKJV).

### **Methodology**

It is easy to say “the Bible is my sole authority.” But in reality, one’s hermeneutics and presuppositions play just as big a role as the written text. If there is one thing that is certain about this debate, it is that Bro. Fields and I approach the Scriptures from different sets of presuppositions and use different hermeneutics. Arriving at the truth of Scripture necessarily requires the use of a proper method of interpretation, and having correct presuppositions.

Fields: “I am in complete agreement with my opponent in so far as he says that “New Testament revelation never contradicts Old Testament revelation.” However, when he goes on to say that being opposed to Premillennialism causes one to “disregard and contradict Old Testament prophecy” I must strongly disagree. It is here that the reader will find one of the most fundamental differences between those who profess Premillennial views and those who reject such. That difference being the way in which prophecy is handled.”

Bro. Fields is correct, that the biggest disagreement between us will end up being hermeneutics. But, it will not only be in the Old Testament. Bro. Fields will do what all amillennialists do whenever confronted with something that conflicts with his view, simply deny that the plain sense is the real sense, **even in the New Testament**. God did not really mean what He said literally. The reader should beware, however. This is the tactic of virtually all false teachers. The true sense of most texts is to be understood in the way the original audience would have understood it given their culture, background, knowledge of language, and understanding of past revelation. (The exception will of course be the things God intended to conceal rather than reveal). This is what we call the “grammatical – historical” method. It is not a rigidly “literal”

method. It recognizes that all language uses metaphors, and occasional allegories. However it does not default to these. It takes language in its normal literal sense unless there is ample reason **in the context** to take it in a non-literal sense. We do not define “ample evidence” as merely that it presents a problem for our theology which we must explain away. Such a method is subjective, and the interpreter becomes the final authority, not the Word of God.

Bro. Fields sets out to demonstrate his methodology with the following statement:

Fields: “Premillennialists fail to realize, or outright reject, the biblical fact that many prophetic statements have a dual application. That is, they had an immediate, and usually physical, application to the prophet’s immediate audience **and** they had a more far reaching spiritual application to be fulfilled by Christ and/or his church.

The perpetuity of the Davidic dynasty is a prime example of dual prophecy. In 2 Samuel 7, David had purposed to build God a house. God sent the prophet Nathan to tell David that he would not be the one to build the house but his son would build him a house (12, 13). The immediate application of this is clearly Solomon and his work of building the Temple (1 Kings 5:5; 6:12). However, the New Testament gives this its ultimate fulfillment in Christ and the church (cf. Jn. 2:19, 20; Acts 2:29-30; 13:23).”

Here Bro. Fields has asserted one of his principle hermeneutics, claiming that we do not “realize” the truth of it. Yes, because there is little truth in it. It is a fabricated device used to twist the Scriptures. According to Bro. Fields, it is a “biblical fact” that prophecy has a dual nature. First of all, even if he could show that SOME prophecies have a dual fulfillment, this would not establish that all, or even most, prophecy is similar. Nor does it justify interpreting any particular prophecy as having a dual nature simply because some other prophecy may appear so to the interpreter.

Bro. Fields’ example used to justify his hermeneutic only proves that he is using a circular argument. He listed three passages to support his claim, none of which actually demonstrate it. The three passages he cited are as follows:

*John 2:19 NKJV*

*19 Jesus answered and said to them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.”*

According to Bro. Fields, this passage is somehow related to the Old Testament prophecies of the building of Solomon's Temple, and is supposed to demonstrate his alleged "dual fulfillment" principle. Yet, Jesus was not referring to the Temple in Jerusalem (Herod's Temple), but to His own body, as verse 21 states plainly. *"But He was speaking of the temple of His body."* How is this any kind of fulfillment of the statements about Solomon's Temple? Jesus simply used a metaphor, calling His own body a "temple," because he was God in human flesh (His body being a true "temple" of God). There is no connection to the prophecy of Solomon's Temple whatsoever.

*Acts 2:29-30 NKJV*

*29 "Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. 30 Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne.*

I don't see how this passage in any way indicates a "dual fulfillment" principle. Perhaps Bro. Fields intended to indicate that Christ is presently reigning on David's throne, and that this necessitates taking the Old Testament prophecies regarding His reign allegorically. However, in Acts 2:29-30, the last clause, *"He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne,"* the verb "καθισαι" (to be seated) is an infinitive of purpose.<sup>1</sup> There is no implication that the action was already accomplished, only intended (the reason for raising Him from the dead). In other words, God raised Jesus from the dead in order that He might sit upon the Throne of David and rule, according to His promise to David. The promise to David requires that the Christ have a physical, yet eternal, form in order to rule the nations on earth. Hence, the resurrection of His body was necessary. The text does not state or imply that Jesus was seated on David's throne when Peter made this statement. **His resurrection simply precedes it, and makes it possible.** Being seated in heaven at the Father's side does not require a resurrection of the body, since physical bodies are linked to a physical creation, not heaven. (See also Psalm 110:1-2).

*Acts 13:23 NKJV*

*23 From this man's seed, according to the promise, God raised up for Israel a Savior — Jesus —*

Acts 13:23 only indicates that Jesus is of the seed of David, which no one disputes.

In support of his "dual application" theory, Bro. Fields then cites Matthew 2:15, which quotes Hosea 11:1. However, he then admitted, "in the context of the original statement it was not a prophetic statement at all." How then can this be an example of his proposed hermeneutic which supposedly deals with prophecy? I certainly agree that on

occasion, types are used in Scripture regarding historical facts. But, types are not prophecy, nor are historical narratives prophecy. Therefore, Bro. Fields has not demonstrated his claim, but merely assumes it correct, and declares it so. He concludes, "Hosea 11:1 finds **dual meaning** in its New Testament usage." Not so fast. There is no "dual meaning" to the historical statement of Hosea. Its meaning is plain from the context. It refers to Israel's sojourn in Egypt. Matthew's use of it was meant to draw a parallel (type) between Israel's sojourn in Egypt (where the twelve tribes were preserved from the famine) with Jesus' sojourn there (to be spared from the wrath of Herod). A historical statement has only one meaning, in reference to a historical fact. Matthew drew a comparison between Jesus and history, nothing more. The word "fulfilled" merely means to be made "full" or "complete." And so, in the sense of a type, the antitype (Christ) makes the type complete. This is not prophecy. That Christ in this sense "fulfills" the type in no sense nullifies the normal, plain, sense of the text referenced! In other words, the experience of Jesus in Egypt in no way detracts from the historical fact of Israel in Egypt. Yet, this is precisely what Bro. Fields is attempting to do – deny the plain sense of Old Testament prophecy with the claim that it has some deeper meaning in the New Testament. In Bro. Fields' theology, Jesus is now reigning as King on the Throne of David, fulfilling the promise to David in its totality. But, supposing this to be true, did this alleged "dual fulfillment" in any way nullify the historical fulfillment of the promise that Solomon would reign on the Throne of David and build the Temple in Jerusalem? Hardly! That prophecy was fulfilled literally, just as stated. Therefore, even if there was a dual application to these prophecies, the one does not cancel out the other, or make the literal sense void (which is what Bro. Fields is attempting to do, so that he has a mechanism for denying the many prophecies of the restoration of Israel, Jerusalem, and the land). His professed hermeneutic has actually demonstrated that the literal fulfillment will indeed come to pass, just as it is written.

Fields: "What my opponent fails to acknowledge in his noble statement of harmony between Old and New Testament Scripture is that Old Testament Scripture **must** be understood in light of its New Testament usage."

If I have failed to acknowledge this, let me do so now. Old Testament prophecy must be understood in the manner in which the New Testament writers interpreted it. However, what you will see from Bro. Fields is not clear examples where New Testament writers interpreted such prophecies allegorically (thereby diminishing their literal sense, which is essential to amillennial eschatology). On the contrary, New Testament writers understood Old Testament prophecy literally. What you will actually see is Bro. Fields imposing his own presuppositions on the Apostles, as he has already demonstrated in referencing Peter's words in Acts 2:29-30.

Fields: "Premillennialism seeks to interpret New Testament Scripture so as to make it comply with Old Testament context. This is reverse to the manner in which proper interpretation is to occur. The Old is subservient to the New, not vice versa."

What Bro. Fields actually means is you should violate the context and language of the Old Testament prophecies, under the supposed precedent of the Apostles' doing so. But, the Apostles absolutely respected the contexts and language of Old Testament prophecy. They did not play fast and loose with Old Testament prophecy, as do amillennialists. Bro. Fields has indeed put his finger on the crux of this entire debate. But, he has not shown why his method is right.

Fields: "New Testament writers acknowledged this in revealing the Old to be types and shadows of the New (Heb. 8:5; 10:1; 1 Cor. 10:11). The crucial point of understanding types and shadows is that the type is always subservient (i.e. lesser) to the antitype. The shadow is the lesser to the substance. For example, baptism into Christ is the greater mode of cleansing from sin than was the universal flood of Noah (1 Peter 3:20, 21). We study the Old Testament Scriptures for what they have to teach us, much of it typically, about being the faithful people of God (Rom. 15:4). Not so that we can **manipulate** New Testament Scripture into a subservient role to the context of that which has become obsolete (Heb. 8:13)."

No sir, the New Testament writers acknowledged no such thing. Nor does the use of **types** by New Testament writers in any way justify taking **prophecy** non-literally. That "baptism" is compared to the "flood" in no way implies that the flood did not occur literally! Peter simply drew an analogy, that in the same way Noah was saved from catastrophic judgment through the water, the baptized believer is saved from the next catastrophic judgment through the water of baptism. The "flood" is not now "subservient" to baptism. That is preposterous. The flood has nothing to do with baptism. It only served as an analogy for Peter's purposes. Peter's statement has absolutely ZERO impact on how we interpret Noah's flood! Nor is the flood "prophetic" of baptism. It is an historical illustration.

I find Bro. Fields' reference to Hebrews 8:13 to support his point astounding! This verse states that the Law of Moses has been made "obsolete" by the coming of the New Covenant. Yet, apparently Bro. Fields would have you believe this means prophecy (or perhaps the entirety of Old Testament Scripture) has therefore become obsolete! I think Bro. Fields is confusing the "Old Covenant" (the Law given through Moses) with the "Old Testament" (the Hebrew Scriptures). The last time I checked, the old "covenant"



referenced in Hebrews 8 referred specifically to precepts and laws given to Israel through Moses on Mt Sinai. This has nothing to do with the prophecies in the Old Testament of the restoration of Israel, Jerusalem, and the land.

Fields: "I believe another great fallacy of the Premillennialist doctrine is in their looking to Old Testament Scripture for any "eschatological" relevance at all. Eschatology deals with "last things." However, the Old Testament prophets were not looking to "last things." They were looking to the next things, the things of the New Covenant that would bring their own to a close and begin the final stage of human history (Jer. 31:31-34). I would like for my opponent to seriously ponder this question and make his best effort to give it an answer in harmony with his "eschatology." Why would the Old Testament prophets be prophesying the second coming of Christ, or things relating to it, when they were still looking forward to his first coming? Premillennialism does a great disservice to those holy men of old by supposing that they, to a large degree, ignored the next great event of human history - the establishment of the church - and just leapfrogged it in preference to the second coming. I do not believe there is a single Old Testament prophecy yet awaiting fulfillment. They were, every one, fulfilled in Christ and his church (Luke 24:25-27; Eph. 3:10-12). I am sure if I am wrong on this point that my opponent will be quick to point it out."

First, it appears that Bro. Fields is supposing that I am a dispensationalist. They claim that the present age was not foreseen in Old Testament prophecy. I strongly disagree. Many prophecies deal with the present age, including Jer. 31:31, and Joel 2:8-29. But, it is a non-sequitur to suppose that the prophets could not prophecy of the second coming because the first coming had not yet occurred.

Bro. Fields suggestion, that there are no Old Testament prophecies that deal with the second coming of Christ, is easy to refute. Did not Peter indicate plainly that the prophets spoke of Christ's first and second comings?

*1 Peter 1:10-12 NKJV*

*10 Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, 11 searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ **and the glories that would follow**. (cf. Matt. 24:30, Rom. 8:17-18; Titus 2:13)*

Jesus Himself referenced Old Testament prophecies of His second coming. For example:

Dan 7:13-14 NKJV

13 "I was watching in the night visions, And behold, One like the Son of Man, Coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, And they brought Him near before Him.

14 Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, Which shall not pass away, And His kingdom the one Which shall not be destroyed.

Matt 24:29-31 NKJV

29 "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 30 Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. 31 And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

The Apostles quoted Old Testament prophecies, and applied them to the second coming of Christ. For example:

1 Cor 15:53-54 NKJV

54 So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."

Note the word, "then," (Gr. "τοτε") means "at that time." This prophecy quoted by Paul is from Isaiah 25:8, as follows:

Isa 25:6-10 KJV

6 And in this mountain shall the LORD of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.

7 And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations.

8 He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces [quoted in Rev. 7:17]; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken it.

9 And it shall be said **in that day**, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

10 For **in this mountain** shall the hand of the LORD rest, and Moab shall be trodden down under him, even as straw is trodden down for the dunghill.

The Apostle Paul has placed the resurrection and transformation of the believers' bodies at this event, prophesied by Isaiah. Isaiah continues as follows:

*Isaiah 26 KJV*

1 **In that day** shall this song be sung **in the land of Judah**; "**We have a strong city**; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks.

2 Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in." ...

19 Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.

20 Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast.

21 For, behold, the LORD cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain.

27:1 **In that day** the LORD with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent, even leviathan that crooked serpent; and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea.

This prophecy includes the resurrection of the dead, the destruction of the beast from the sea (Rev. 13), and the judgment of Satan (Rev. 20:1-3). Another clear example is Peter's heavy reliance on Isaiah 65-66 when describing the purging of the land by fire at Jesus' return, (2 Peter 3). He explained why he was writing these things, "*that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets,*" (2 Pet. 3:2). Yet, Bro. Fields would have us believe that no Old Testament prophecies deal with Christ's second coming, because His first coming had not yet occurred when Isaiah wrote! This alone ought to convince the reader that amillennialism is false.

### **The Jewish Hope**

Bro. Fields next attempts to show that the Jewish "hope" was indeed misplaced, as I predicted he would do. He claims that Jesus sought to overturn the Jewish hope, and correct His disciples.

Fields: "Where the Jews of Jesus day envisioned a purely physical fulfillment of these things; a purely human descendent of David who would sit on a physical, literal throne on earth and who would rule by military power; modern Premillennialists find themselves in complete agreement with them. However, Jesus corrected these misconceptions among his countrymen, to their dismay and rejection of him. He challenged their thinking of a purely human descendent of David (Matt. 22:41-46)."

Let's examine the passage Bro. Fields cites in support of his claim.

*Matt 22:41-46 NKJV*

*41 While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, 42 saying, "What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?" They said to Him, "The Son of David."*

*43 He said to them, "How then does David in the Spirit call Him 'Lord,' saying:*

*44 'The LORD said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool"'?*

*45 If David then calls Him 'Lord,' how is He his Son?" 46 And no one was able to answer Him a word, nor from that day on did anyone dare question Him anymore.*

I trust that Bro. Fields is not proposing that Jesus was denying His literal descent from David. Does Bro. Fields disagree with the Jews' answer, that the Christ is "the Son of David?" Clearly, Jesus did not attempt to refute their answer, but accepted it as fact. He only demonstrated that they did not fully understand how the Messiah could be the "son of David," yet also be the "Son of God," both of which are clearly prophesied in literal language in the Psalms. (Of course, the virgin birth explains it). So, the only error in the thinking of these Pharisees that Jesus challenged was how to reconcile Psalm 2:7-12 and Psalm 110:1. It is not that these Psalms are not literal, or that the Jews were wrong for taking something literally. It is that these Psalms appear to present a paradox, that the Messiah is the "Son of David" and the "Son of God" at the same time. There is nothing here that overturns the Jewish hope of a Messiah who would rule in Jerusalem. Jesus simply pointed out an apparent difficulty they had not resolved, but which could easily be resolved if they simply believed the stories of His own supernatural birth of the Virgin. Jesus was seeking to challenge their rejection of Him as the Messiah.

Fields: "He refused to be made an earthly king (Jn. 6:15)."

Well, of course! They wanted to take Him by force to make Him king, and He had not even accomplished His mission of dying on the cross, or that the "Gospel of the Kingdom" must be preached to all the nations first. Again, nothing here suggests that the nature of the Jewish hope was misplaced, only its timing.

Fields: "He told Pilate that his kingdom was not of this world, i.e. not a physical kingdom (Jn. 18:36)."

Bro. Fields' added comment, "not a physical kingdom" is absolutely unjustified, and is a clear example of his eisegesis (forcing his own ideas into the text, rather than "exegesis," deriving them from the text). He also forgot to quote the last part of the verse. It literally reads: "*but now My kingdom is not from here.*" The little adverb, "now" (Gr. νῦν), means "at this present time." Jesus was not denying that His Kingdom would be of a political or physical nature. Rather, He was denying that it would come now in this way at this time (by overthrowing the present Roman authorities).

Fields: "This idea was so deeply ingrained in their thinking that Jesus even had to deal with this among his own disciples. They held misconceptions, despite Jesus repeated teaching on the matter, right up to the ascension. One of the last things they asked Jesus was if he would restore the kingdom prior to his ascension (Acts 1:6). Jesus told them that it wasn't for them to know the times and seasons of such things but that they would receive the Holy Spirit. He had already told them that when they received the Holy Spirit he would reveal things to them that they were not ready to receive during his ministry (Jn. 16:12, 13). After the Holy Spirit came in Acts 2, they never again expressed any confusion over the nature of the kingdom."

The "confusion" is Bro. Fields', not the Apostles'. "This idea" (a physical, political Kingdom) was "so deeply ingrained in their thinking" because it was a major theme of all of the prophets! Jesus' correction of their error did NOT challenge in any way their concept that the Kingdom would be restored to Israel by Jesus. The only correction Jesus offered was in its timing, just as He did with Pilate. Secondly, Bro. Fields must think that the Apostles were enormously stupid students, or else Jesus was an incredibly poor teacher. Their question, "*will you at this time restore again the Kingdom to Israel?*" immediately followed forty days of personal instruction by Jesus concerning the "Kingdom of God," as the preceding verses show.

*Acts 1:1-3 NKJV*

*1 The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, 2 until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen, 3 to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them **during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.***

Dear reader, please notice what Bro. Fields is really proposing. The Apostles, whom Jesus had taught personally for over three years, for whom “*He opened their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures*” (Lk. 24:45), and who were then given forty days of intense teaching regarding the “*Kingdom of God,*” still did not get it! What a total waste of Jesus’ time! Does Bro. Fields suppose they were not as enlightened as he is, and his fellow amillennialists? If there was ever an opportunity for Jesus to correct this supposed error it was when they asked Him their question. Yet, He declined to do so. In fact, His answer implies that the Kingdom would be restored to Israel after the Apostles completed the Great Commission.

Notice carefully Jesus’ reply to the question, “*Lord, will you at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel.*” He replied, “*It is not for you to know the times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority.*” The words “*times or seasons*” are in apposition to “*time*” in the Apostles’ question. Essentially, Jesus told them the time when the Kingdom will be restored to Israel is not for them to know, but is known only to the Father. This corresponds to Jesus’ statement in the Olivet Discourse, “*But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.*” (Mark 13:32-33 NKJV). And His turning their attention to the task at hand, “*You shall receive power*” and “*be my witnesses,*” also pointed them back to the Olivet Discourse. “*And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.*” (Matt. 24:14). Again, as with His previous statements regarding His Kingdom, it was always its **timing** that was in question, not its nature. That Jesus addressed timing here, and not nature, is sufficient evidence to reject Bro. Fields’ interpretation.

Bro Fields is overlooking what it means to be “*the Christ,*” the anointed King. This term was a synonym for the coming Davidic King who would sit upon the Throne of David, and rule over both Israel and Judah. The title, “*the Christ*” (Greek for “*the Messiah*”), is found numerous times in the Old Testament. For example:

*Psalm 2 LXX*

*1 Wherefore did the heathen rage, and the nations imagine vain things?*

*2 The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers gathered themselves together, against the Lord, and against **his Christ;***

*3 saying, Let us break through their bonds, and cast away their yoke from us.*

*4 He that dwells in the heavens shall laugh them to scorn, and the Lord shall mock them.*

*5 Then shall he speak to them in his anger, and trouble them in his fury.*

*6 But **I have been made king by him on Sion his holy mountain,***

*7 ¶ declaring the ordinance of the Lord: the Lord said to me, Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee.*

8 Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the ends of the earth for thy possession.

This prophecy concerns the Christ's future rule from Zion (Jerusalem). The term, "the Christ" is firmly connected to the Throne of David, and ruling over the nation of Israel. The term "the Christ" was used of David Himself, when he occupied the "Throne of David" over all Israel, (Psalm 28:8 LXX; Psalm 84:9 LXX; Psalm 89:51 LXX), and of Solomon when occupying the same office (2 Chron. 6:42 LXX). The ultimate "Christ" would be the eternal King of Israel from David's loins who would restore Zion (Psalm 132:10-18 LXX). In this Psalm, God promised David, "I will set upon your throne the fruit of your body." David never occupied the Throne in heaven where Jesus is presently seated at the right hand of the Father. He occupied a throne in Jerusalem over the twelve tribes and the land of Israel.

After the Babylonian captivity brought the Davidic dynasty to an end, the term "the Christ" was understood by the Jews with exclusive reference to the future King of David's seed who would come and restore the Kingdom to Israel. Isaiah prophesied of Christ the King with these words:

*Isaiah 9:6-7 NKJV*

*6 For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

*7 Of the increase of **His government** and peace there will be no end, **upon the throne of David and over his [David's] kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever.** The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.*

Note that this promised child who would rule on the Throne of David would bring "judgment" and "justice" to the kingdom formerly ruled by David. In other words, it is a restored political kingdom, not an entirely new Kingdom in heaven. The restored Davidic dynasty is still evident in the prophecy given to Mary by Gabriel.

*Luke 1:31-33 NKJV*

*31 And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. 32 He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and **the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David.** 33 **And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.**"*

What does this have to do with the Apostle's question in Acts 1 about restoring the Kingdom to Israel? Simply this: The term "the Christ" is pregnant with prophetic meaning. And this meaning was acknowledged by Peter in his Pentecost sermon (Acts 2:29-31). Of course Bro. Fields would have you believe the concept of what it means to be "the Christ" was radically altered in Peter's mind by the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. Peter suddenly went from supposing that "the Christ" was to restore the Davidic dynasty and rule over David's Kingdom (as is evident from the Apostles' question in Acts 1:6), to embracing a radically new view of Jesus as a cosmic King with a cosmic immaterial Kingdom. However, let's not forget Peter's former good confession.

*Matt 16:13-17 NKJV*

*13 When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?"*

*14 So they said, "Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets."*

*15 He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"*

*16 Simon Peter answered and said, "**You are the Christ**, the Son of the living God."*

*17 Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, **for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.**"*

The good confession, that Jesus is "the Christ, the Son of God," has specific reference to Psalm 2, where both terms are used of Him prophetically. To make the good confession of faith is not merely to mimic phonetic sounds of the consonants and vowels like some parrot. Rather, a proper response to Jesus' question requires deep contemplation of what it really means to be "the Christ," based on the hope found in the Psalms and the Prophets. And Peter's confession, that Jesus Himself was indeed "the Christ," indicates Peter's acknowledgement of Jesus as the one who was to come and restore the Davidic dynasty to Israel, just as prophesied in Psalm 2.

Notice that Jesus pointed to the source of Peter's astute observation – divine revelation from the Father in heaven. If this divine revelation included an alleged role as a cosmic King with a cosmic Kingdom, contrary Peter's own Jewish expectation, why did Peter afterwards expect Jesus to restore the Kingdom to Israel the day of His ascension? In addition to the divine revelation from the Father, Jesus also had "*opened their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures,*" on the day of His resurrection, and proceeded to instruct them for forty more days regarding the Kingdom of God! Conversely, if the divine revelation given to Peter that Jesus was indeed "the Christ" did NOT include this alleged new role as a cosmic King, and negate his former Jewish expectation, then this proposed amillennial concept is alien to the good confession! It is a bastardizing of the good confession to hold a foreign (pagan) concept of what it means



to acknowledge that Jesus is “the Christ.” The only true confession must proceed from a proper understanding of what it means to be “the Christ,” that Jesus is indeed the promised King from David’s loins who will restore the Davidic dynasty, the nation of Israel, and Zion itself! To confess any other “Christ” than this is not much different than confessing the Gnostic “Christ.”

I think it is significant that Bro. Fields admits that the Apostles had this belief regarding “the Christ” who would be a political King of Israel, at the time Jesus ascended to heaven. We can therefore agree that the Apostles had an essentially “premillennial” view of the Kingdom on the Day of Pentecost, since Jesus’ correction of their error did not involve His role as “the Christ” or the nature of the Kingdom, but only its timing.

Fields: “Warner would have Peter and Paul continuing in their misconceptions even after receiving the Holy Spirit’s guidance. He presents two passages in an attempt to have these apostles refer to a physical restoration of Israel and a “renovated” earth.”

Let me point out to the reader that the burden of proof is on Bro. Fields. He is the one claiming a radical theological reprogramming of Peter’s mind, that somewhere between Acts 1 and Acts 3 he suddenly changed his understanding of who “the Christ” is, and altered his eschatology from Israel’s hope of a restored kingdom to new a hope of a cosmic King, kingdom, and destiny of the redeemed. Bro. Fields claims that the Holy Spirit did something in a few moments that Jesus failed to do in His entire public ministry. Even after His resurrection, when “*He opened their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures,*” and then taught them for forty days “*the things concerning the Kingdom of God,*” the truth of amillennialism still escaped them! Yet, even Paul acknowledged much later that the “hope” he preached was the same “hope” Israel sought to attain, (Acts 26:4-7; 28:20, 30-31). There was no radical shift in the eschatology of the Apostles, as Bro. Fields claims.

### **Peter’s Sermon to the Jews at the Temple**

Let’s now observe how Bro. Fields explains Peter’s sermon in Acts 3.

Fields: “The first is Acts 3:19-22, in which, says he, Peter “confirmed” to the Jews that their expectation of an earthly kingdom and world power was correct. He emphasizes the terms “times of refreshing” and “restoration of all things” as though they are in reference to his proposition. However, Acts 3:19 is a parallel statement to Acts 2:38. Notice:

Acts 3:19

**Repent** ye therefore, and **be converted**, that your **sins may be blotted out**, when the **times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord**;

Acts 2:38

Then Peter said unto them, **Repent**, and **be baptized** every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the **remission of sins**, and ye shall **receive the gift of the Holy Ghost**.

So, “be baptized” is parallel to “be converted,” “sins may be blotted out” is parallel with “remission of sins,” and “the gift of the Holy Spirit” is parallel with “times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.” So “the gift of the Holy Spirit” is the same thing as “the times of refreshing.” Obviously, “the times of the refreshing” is not referring to some future restored earthly kingdom.”

The KJV translation quoted by Bro. Fields does not do justice to the grammar. A much better translation here is the NKJV. 18 *“But those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled. 19 Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out [Gr. – unto the blotting out of your sins], 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.”* (Acts 3:18-21 NKJV). The KJV wrongly renders “ὅπως” as “when.” It should be “so that.” Secondly, it renders the verb “ἐλθῶσιν” as “shall come” (indicative mood) when it is actually “may come” (subjunctive mood). The NKJV gets it right on both counts. Note that the clauses, “times of refreshing may come,” and, “He may send Jesus Christ,” are linked together with the conjunction “and” (καί), both being the possible **result** of their collective repentance, and **both being future**. Therefore, the “times of refreshing” would occur when “He may send Jesus Christ.” If the “times of refreshing” began at Pentecost, it was already present when Peter was preaching. He therefore could not speak of this as something looked for in the future, and certainly not linked to their repentance.

The word “times,” in the clause “times of refreshing,” is actually “καιροί” (seasons). The word “times” in the clause “times of restoration of all things” is “χρονων” (times). These are the same two plural terms Jesus used when answering the Apostles’ question, “Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” To which Jesus replied, “It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority,” (Acts 1:6-7). The clause “times or seasons” in Jesus’ answer refers clearly to their hope of restoring the Kingdom to Israel. In Acts 3, Peter seems to almost quote Jesus’ answer! His use of the same two terms together, “the seasons of refreshing” and “times of restoration of all

things,” clearly reveal that his thinking had not changed at all regarding the former question posed to Jesus in Acts 1. The “seasons of refreshing” and “times of restoration of all things” were synonymous (the latter being in apposition to the former), describing the times when the Kingdom will be restored to Israel, which “times and seasons” were known only to the Father. These two terms are used together in the New Testament only one other time, when Paul also referred to the return of Jesus on the Day of the Lord, (1 Thess. 5:1). It is therefore very difficult to justify a different interpretation here, when Peter links the three clauses, “seasons of refreshing,” “He may send Jesus Christ,” and “the times of restoration of all things.”

It should also be noted that the parallel drawn by Bro. Fields between this passage and Acts 2:38 simply will not work. In particular, the result of their repentance and baptism in Acts 2:38 is a definite promise for each of them individually. That is, “*you shall receive* (future indicative) *the gift of the Holy Spirit.*” The indicative mood states a fact, a concrete promise. However, in Acts 3, the promise associated with their repentance and conversion, “*so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, 20 and that He may send Jesus Christ,” are both in the subjunctive mood, which indicates possibility, not certainty. Peter was encouraging these Jews to repent and be converted collectively so that a prophesied event may occur, the return of Jesus Christ from heaven who would bring “the times of refreshing.” He did not say, if you repent God will send Jesus now, or the times of refreshing will come now.*

Peter linked Jesus’ possible soon return (subjunctive mood) and the possible soon coming of “times of refreshing” (subjunctive mood) with the repentance of the Jews because he understood from Jesus that He would not return until the time for Israel’s national repentance, (cf. Matt. 23:37-39; Rom. 11:25-32). His eagerness to link these reveals that Peter’s mind was still focused on the original question in Acts 1. Now that he had receive the power Jesus promised, he was eager to follow Jesus’ command in Acts 1:8, so that the thing for which he hoped, the restoration of the Kingdom of Israel, would come as Jesus implied in His answer. Consequently, he urged these Jews to repent so that Jesus would return and the Kingdom would be restored to Israel by Him. We should also not fail to notice that the word “restoration” in the clause “restoration of all things” is the noun form of the verb “restore” in the Apostles’ question to Jesus, “*Lord, will you at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?*” The two phrases, “the restoration of all things” and “restore again the kingdom to Israel,” were essentially the same in Peter’s mind.

The rest of this passage makes this interpretation certain. “*He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets*” (Acts 3:21 NIV). This is an explanation of the preceding clause, “*that He may send Jesus*

*Christ.*" The time for this "restoration" is when Jesus returns from heaven. And it is the same restoration described by the prophets. Here we have a very clear statement that the prophets predicted the time of the second coming and what follows, contrary to Bro. Fields' previous claim, that they could not do so before His first coming. They prophesied both His first and second comings, the present age and the age to come.

Fields: "Where Mr. Warner would have us believe that the "restoration of all things" refers to when Christ will come to restore Israel, as indicated in his proposition, the passage actually contradicts that notion. It says that Jesus "must" remain in heaven "until the times of restoration of all things." That is, until the restoration has taken place. The passage doesn't say that the restoration will occur when he comes again but that when he comes it will have already taken place."

It says nothing of the kind! Bro. Fields is putting words in Peter's mouth! The prepositional phrase, "until the times of restoration of all things" modifies the verb "receive." A literal rendering of the Greek is, "*whom it is necessary for heaven to receive until the times of restoration of all things.*" The "times of restoration of all things" is a specific period of time. (It was typical to use the singular "time" when a brief time was meant, and the plural "times" when an extended period was meant). Jesus has been "received" by the heavens, and must remain there, until the times when all things will be restored comes. He did not say, "until after the restoration of all things," but "until the **times** of restoration of all things." That is, until the period of time during which the restoration will take place. As should be evident to all, Bro. Fields is transgressing his professed hermeneutic. He claims to let the New Testament interpret the Old, but he is imposing his own ideas on Peter, rather than deriving them from the text. Peter was absolutely consistent with a literal reading of Old Testament prophecy, and with the hope of Israel expressed in the disciples' question to Jesus in Acts 1.

Fields: "Peter says that the "times of restoration of all things" was "spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets." One example of the prophetic assurance of the "restoration" is found in Isaiah 49:6, where the servant (Christ) is said to be for the restoration of Israel **and** the Gentiles. Prophetic statements like this refer to the time when both Jew and Gentile would be restored to God in one body (cf. Eph. 2:11-17). So, when Peter made the statement under consideration, **before** the gospel had gone to the Gentiles, he was saying that Christ would come **after** restoration had been made available to all (cf. Matt. 24:14; Col. 1:23)."

Bro Fields seems to have overlooked that "all things" is **neuter**, not masculine in Greek, (which would be required if he was speaking of the restoration of people only). It is

about the restoration of the land, Jerusalem, and the Throne of David, not just the people. Peter's comment regarding all the prophets predicting the "restoration of all things" was in reference to some of the following passages: Isaiah 25; Isaiah 35; Isaiah 49:14-26; Isaiah 51; Isaiah 52:1-12; Isaiah 54; Isaiah 60; Isaiah 62; Isaiah 65:17-25; Isaiah 66. I could go on and on from the rest of the prophets, but these will suffice. These prophecies cannot be explained away or diminished by Bro. Fields' professed "dual fulfillment," or by allegory. They are either true, or they are false. "Let God be true, and every man a liar." I will quote one such prophecy Peter had in mind when referring to "the restoration of all things."

*Zechariah 14*

*1 Behold, the day of the LORD is coming, and your spoil will be divided in your midst.*

*2 For I will gather **all the nations** to battle against Jerusalem; the city shall be taken, the houses rifled, and the women ravished. Half of the city shall go into captivity, but the remnant of the people shall not be cut off from the city.*

*3 Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations, As He fights in the day of battle. 4 And in that day **His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives**, which faces Jerusalem on the east. ... 5 ... **Thus the LORD my God will come, and all the saints with You.** ...*

*9 And **the LORD shall be King over all the earth.** In that day it shall be — "The LORD is one," and His name one.*

*10 **All the land shall be turned into a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem. Jerusalem shall be raised up and inhabited in her place from Benjamin's Gate to the place of the First Gate and the Corner Gate, and from the Tower of Hananel to the king's winepresses.***

*11 **The people shall dwell in it; and no longer shall there be utter destruction, but Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited.** ...*

*16 And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of **all the nations** which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.*

Is this prophecy true or false? It is not capable of being explained away with Bro. Fields' alleged dual fulfillment. This was Peter's hope, both before and after Pentecost.

Fields: "Notice also the parallel between God speaking of the times of restoration by the mouth of all his prophets in verse 21 and "all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of **these days**," in verse 24. So "the restoration of all things" is parallel to "these days," which is the Christian Age (cf. 1 Pet. 1:9-12)."

No, "these days" do not refer to "the times of restoration of all things," but to the times spoken of by Moses mentioned in the previous verse. There are three distinct fulfillments of Old Testament prophecy mentioned in this whole passage. First, Peter wrote that what the prophets foretold concerning Jesus' crucifixion had already been fulfilled (v. 18). Then he spoke of the possible result of their collective repentance, that the "seasons of refreshing" would come, that God would send Jesus, and the "times of restoration of all things" would come. After this he spoke of Moses' prophecy about Jesus, the "Prophet like unto me" (Deut. 18:17-19), and that those who refused "that Prophet" would be destroyed from among the nation of Israel. It is this prophecy that Peter linked to the present, warning them that they are the ones who Moses spoke about who would be destroyed if they did not heed "that Prophet." Then, in the next verse when Peter said, "*all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days,*" he meant that the same prophets who had predicted the "restoration of all things" likewise (in the same way) also predicted the days of which Moses wrote, which were then present. Peter distinguished "these days" from the "times of refreshing," "He will send Jesus Christ," and "the times of restoration of all things," rather than linking them with "these days."

Let me also point out, in the passage that Bro. Fields cites above (1 Pet. 1:9-12), the prophets "*testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.*" The "glories" that follow include Christ's future inheritance, and ours as His "co-heirs," (cf. Rom. 8:16-25).

Fields: "Notice also, in this very context, the application that Peter makes from the promise of Abraham (Acts 3:25). He says the promise was realized when Jesus was raised to deliver them from their iniquities (Acts 3:26). So the promise to Abraham, that in his seed would all nations be blessed, Peter says, was realized **first** with the sons of the prophets, the Jews, by Christ making possible **the remission of their sins**. Not by promising some future earthly kingdom."

Bro. Fields has misrepresented what Peter actually said to these Jews. Peter did not say when the Abrahamic promise was or is to be realized. The promise, "*Through your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed,*" refers to Gentiles, not Jews. Peter merely pointed out that his audience was technically Abraham's descendants, the natural heirs of the covenant. As Jesus told Nicodemus, entrance into the blessings of that covenant required more than physical descent. It required a new birth. It was no different with these Jews. Jesus came to the Jewish nation, first. Paul repeatedly said, "to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." They had been offered this conversion "first" before all the other nations of the world would be blessed through the Abrahamic Covenant. This in no way overturns their expectation of the fulfillment of the Abrahamic promises including

the everlasting land inheritance. Rather, it affirms it, because any reference to the Abrahamic Covenant would certainly include the everlasting land inheritance in the Jewish mind (which Peter did not contradict, but affirmed). Bro. Fields' interpretation has Peter preaching a message (a gospel with a cosmic hope) to Jews who had the hope of Israel's restoration firmly ingrained in their thinking, using all the terms familiar to them, and referencing their prophets, who in their thinking proclaimed a literal hope of the restoration of Israel, Jerusalem, and the Throne of David. Yet, Peter did not clarify his terms, inform them that their literal interpretation of the prophets was mistaken, or that there was a cosmic destiny awaiting them if they repented! The concept is absurd!

### **Romans 8**

Bro. Fields objects to my use of Romans 8 because, "I don't find the word 'cursed' in this context anywhere."... "Could he be referring to God's cursing the land after Adam's sin? (Gen. 3:17). Was not that curse lifted after the Flood? (Gen. 5:29; 8:21)."

No, it was not lifted. And the above passages make no mention of lifting of the curse. Do men still toil by the sweat of their brow? Does the earth still bring forth thorns? Do women still travail in childbirth? Does a man not still have authority over his wife? Is death still part of this creation? All these are part of the "curse," not only the portion related to farming.

Fields: "Surely, Mr. Warner is not going to say that Paul is **literally** talking about **the physical earth** when he says it has "earnest expectation" and that it "groans." It is not difficult to see how Paul is using a common form of **figurative** personification of the creation as sharing in the suffering and/or glory of its inhabitants. Notice these several passages where the same kind of personification occurs (Isa. 24:4-7; 30:25, 26; 35:1, 2, 7, 9; Ps. 114; 148). Clearly, the "groaning," "waiting," and "hoping," of the creation here is, likewise, to be understood **figuratively**. So, if Paul is using a **figurative** personification of creation, why should we think that the deliverance of the creation from bondage is **literal**?

Paul is emphasizing the hardships that must be endured by the faithful in this sin-sick world. He says that the things suffered by the faithful are not worthy of compare to the glory that will be revealed in them. To emphasize the degree of the suffering he uses this personification of the earth's own suffering under the weight of sin. Likewise, to emphasize the hope of the resurrection (v. 23, 24) he includes the personification of the earth's relief when its purpose as our habitation will have been fulfilled."

There are two enormous problems with Bro. Field's interpretation above. First, if the use of metaphors (the "groaning" of creation) nullifies the promises of its restoration, why does this not nullify the literal resurrection of the saints' bodies? In fact, if we consistently apply Bro. Fields' hermeneutic, we would conclude that there is no resurrection of the body. Secondly, Bro. Fields is overlooking the obvious. Note the words in red.

*Rom 8:19-21 NKJV*

*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.*

Bro. Fields' interpretation, that the whole creation is figuratively joining in with our groaning and rejoicing in our resurrection, simply will not work because of the words in red. The text plainly says that the creation will be restored, and "not only that, but we also" will be restored through the "redemption of our bodies." The same kind of restoration received by the creation is received by our bodies. Note: "*the creation **itself also** will be delivered from the bondage of corruption.*" The word "also" applies the same kind of deliverance "from the bondage of corruption" for both the whole creation and our bodies. The word "itself" proves beyond doubt that the creation is the recipient of this restoration. The one cannot be a figurative representation of the other, because the same restoration is for both the whole creation and our bodies.

Fields: "In Romans 8:24, "saved in this hope" refers to the "redemption of our body" (Rom. 8:23). The "redemption of our body" is a reference to the resurrection. If its [*sic*] not the resurrection then what is it? It is not the redemption from sin because Paul is talking about "sons of God" who are already redeemed. Remember, the context is edification from the knowledge that no matter what we suffer in this world, even if we are killed, we are "more than conquerors" [*sic*] through Christ and this present suffering is not worthy to be compared with the glory that will be revealed in us (Rom. 8:18, 37). Now, what about that glory that will be revealed in us? It shall be revealed when Christ comes to be glorified in His saints (2 Thess. 1:3-12). So the context of the "redemption of our body" fits the context of the resurrection from the dead."



Of course, our hope includes the resurrection of the body. But, the passage is not just about the resurrection of the dead, but the **glory** of the inheritance, which we will enjoy when both our bodies and the inheritance (the land) are restored.

*Rom. 8:15-20 NIV*

*16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. 17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.*

*18 I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. 19 The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed.*

Just what is the inheritance of Christ with whom we are co-heirs, if not the restored creation in the next verses? The restored creation is Jesus' inheritance. Bro. Fields wants you to believe that Jesus' inheritance will be destroyed! Just so the reader does not miss this very important point, let me reference another similar statement of Paul's.

*Heb 1:1-3 NKJV*

*1 God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, 2 has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;*

This creation was made "by Him and **for Him**" (Col. 1:16). He is the "heir" of the creation, and those in Him are co-heirs. It seems a real shame that in amillennialism, God is going to blow up Christ's inheritance, doesn't it? The whole point of the resurrection of Jesus' body, and the future resurrection of our bodies, is so that we can interact within this restored creation forever. It is Jesus' inheritance, and the inheritance of all who have been baptized into Him.

## **The Abrahamic Covenant**

Fields: "In quoting from Hebrews 11:8, 9, 13, 39 and 40, Warner says 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." I do not recall any mention of a future fulfillment of the land promise in Hebrews 11."

I don't know how Bro. Fields can claim to miss the land promise in Hebrews 11, and its future fulfillment in verses 39-40. Let me refresh Bro. Field's memory. In the quotation below, references to the eternal land inheritance are in red. The future aspect is in blue.

Hebrews 11 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; 10 for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. ...

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]. 14 For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. 15 And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. ...

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.

The city, whose builder and maker is God, refers to the restored Jerusalem (Isaiah 65:17-25), that is "Zion" the "City of God" (Psalm 46; Psalm 87:1-3; Isaiah 54:11-14). That the "homeland" Abraham was "seeking" (Abraham's hope) was a "heavenly country" does not mean its location is heaven. "Heavenly" is an adjective, assigning a quality to the land inheritance, not a location. It is quite clear in the context that the "heavenly county" for which Abraham longed, and yes, "hoped" for, was **the very land in which he lived**. His hope was that one day this very land, in which he lived, would be renovated (of a "heavenly" nature), and given to Him, Isaac, and Jacob, as an everlasting inheritance. Paul indicated in the closing verses that they did not receive "the promise" in their lifetimes because they were not meant to be perfected (made complete in their inheritance) apart from the inclusion of "us."

Bro. Fields is on the horns of a dilemma. He stated previously that Abraham did not take the land promises allegorically, but literally. Yet from Hebrews 11, it is clear that the thing for which Abraham looked in hope, trusting in God's promise, was not realized by him, but is to be realized along with "us." Therefore, the land inheritance for which Abraham "hoped," as demonstrated by his living there in tents along with Isaac and Jacob, is meant for us as well as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Note also that Bro. Fields did not deal with the similar statement in Hebrews 6:13-20, which states plainly that Abraham's hope is our hope, "our anchor of the soul." (See also Rom. 4:13-16).

Fields: "From Acts 7:2-6, Warner says that since Stephen said the promise was to give the land "to him (Abraham) for a possession" that the only two possibilities to Abraham having not received it himself is that, 1) "God lied to Abraham;" or,

2) “the promise will be fulfilled in the future.” Why does Warner get to say that those are the “only two possible conclusions”? I would like to offer a third, God gave it to Abraham as a possession in his descendants the same way his descendants paid tithes to Melchizedek in Abraham (Heb. 7:9, 10).”

Sorry, but that just won't work because the promise was repeatedly made to Abraham **AND** his Seed (two distinct entities), not to Abraham as a representative of his Seed. Abraham cannot himself be a representative of his Seed when the text says that it will be given to Abraham **in addition to** his Seed (same with Isaac, and Jacob).

Fields: “The rest of Warner’s quotations can be addressed singularly by demonstrating the elements of the Abrahamic Covenant and how he fails to distinguish between them when addressing the fulfillment of the promises God made to Abraham. There are three distinct elements of the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 12:1-3):

1. The Land Promise (Gen. 12:1, 7).
2. The Nation Promise (Gen. 12:2).
3. The Seed Promise (Gen. 12:3).

As we saw with the dual nature of many Old Testament prophecies, these various elements of the Abrahamic Covenant have dual fulfillments. The Nation Promise was fulfilled in a primary sense by the formation of national Israel as God’s chosen people but its ultimate fulfillment was realized in the establishment of the church, the spiritual nation of promise, the “Israel of God” (1 Pet. 2:9; Gal. 6:16).”

Bro. Fields is mistaken. The “nation” promise was fulfilled literally, through Isaac, Jacob, and the twelve tribes. There is no dual fulfillment. The conversion of the Gentiles is not foreseen in the “nation” (singular) promise, but in the “nations” (plural) promise. In Genesis 12:2, God told Abraham, “*I will make you **a great nation** [singular]; I will bless you, And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing.*” But in Genesis 17:4-5, He told him, “*As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be a father **of many nations**.* No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you a father **of many nations**.”

The first promise was literally fulfilled with the twelve tribes of Israel. The second promise is being literally fulfilled through Christ, the Seed to whom the promise was made. Likewise, the promise, “*In you all nations of the earth will be blessed,*” refers to the specific seed – Christ, through Whom a remnant from every nation are being saved and will receive the land inheritance as co-heirs with Christ. There is no dual fulfillment in any of these promises. They are literal, and specific. The dual fulfillment ploy used by

amillennialists is simply a device to deny what the Word of God says. It is an excuse for unbelief, a fabricated tool for overthrowing the plain sense of God's Word.

Fields: "The Land Promise was fulfilled in the primary sense when Israel took the land of Canaan (Josh. 21:43; 1 Kg. 4:21) but its ultimate fulfillment would be realized in the kingdom of Christ, the new Jerusalem (Rev. 3:12; 21:2)."

How can the land promise refer to heaven, when it was very specific to the land of Canaan, the borders being from the Nile to the Euphrates rivers (Gen. 15:18-21), the very land in which Abraham sojourned? This is a perfect example of twisting the Scriptures, and imposing upon the text the pagan Greek philosophy which envisioned a "heavenly destiny."<sup>2</sup>

Bro. Fields is simply imposing his fabricated hermeneutic and failing to observe Paul's own explanation of the Abrahamic Covenant. In Galatians 3, Paul compared the Abrahamic promise of the land inheritance with the Mosaic promise of a land inheritance. In the Abrahamic promise, the covenant was **unconditional**. God gave it to Abraham **forever** by "promise" and an oath. Consequently, nothing could alter that promise. The land was to be forever Abraham's, Isaac's, and Jacob's, and his "Seed" (singular) who was to come afterward, which Paul identified as "Christ" (v. 16). In other words, the unconditional eternal land inheritance concerns the patriarchs and Jesus Christ (and all who are in Him, as Paul explains in verses 26-29). It does not include the rest of the physical descendants merely because of a genetic relationship. This was clearly Paul's point in verse 16. Therefore, the Jews in Joshua's day did not go into the Land through the Abrahamic Covenant, but through the Mosaic Covenant.

Under the Law of Moses, the physical descendants of Jacob were permitted to live in the land. However, this covenant was conditional, as long as they kept the Law (Deut. 28:58-68). When they did not keep God's Law, they were repeatedly ejected from the land. That is hardly an everlasting inheritance! Paul then stated, "*For if **the inheritance** is of the law, it is no longer of promise; but **God gave it to Abraham by promise**. What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, **till the Seed should come to whom the promise** [of the inheritance] **was made;**" (vss. 18-19).*

"The inheritance" in verse 18 is the eternal land inheritance promised to Abraham and his "Seed" (singular – Christ). There is no other "inheritance" contained in the Abrahamic Covenant or the Mosaic Covenant. The Law was given as a temporary measure, providing Israel with a temporary land inheritance **until** Christ should come, the real "heir" of the eternal land inheritance. In correcting the Galatians' desire to come under the jurisdiction of the Mosaic Covenant, Paul pointed out that "the inheritance"

under the Law was not eternal, nor unconditional, but temporary and conditional. Hence, the only way for his readers to receive “the inheritance” was to be a co-heir with Christ, having been baptized into Jesus Christ, thereby becoming “*Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.*” (vss. 26-29).

I must now address Bro. Field’s reference to Joshua 21.

*Josh 21:43 NKJV*

*43 So the LORD gave to Israel all the land of which He had sworn to give to their fathers, and they took possession of it and dwelt in it.*

This passage does not contradict what I have said, or what Paul has explained in Galatians 3. Notice, it does not say that God gave them all the land he swore to their fathers to give to THEM (Israel). It says, God gave to Israel (under the Law) the **same land** that He had also sworn to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This is not a direct fulfillment of the promise of the eternal land inheritance, because (as Steven pointed out in Acts 7), the promise was to the patriarchs personally, yet they did not receive it personally – yet. This passage takes on new meaning when we view it through Paul’s explanation in Galatians 3, (when we let the Apostles interpret the Old Testament, something Bro. Fields claims, but fails to practice). There were two separate covenants involving the land at work here, one unconditional and eternal, and one conditional and temporary. Under Joshua, Israel took possession of the land that God promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But, the New Testament adds the insight needed, that this was a temporary conditional possession under the Law, and that the permanent unconditional inheritance is yet to be realized through Jesus Christ – the Seed of promise. Thus Paul writes, “*For if Joshua had given them rest, he would not afterwards have spoken of another day. There remains therefore a rest for the people of God.*” (Heb. 4:8-9). I would encourage the reader to study Hebrews 3-4, which also links our future hope with the land promise.<sup>3</sup>

Notice Paul’s handling of Old Testament prophecy in Galatians 3. He did not deny the literal fulfillment of the slightest detail of the Abrahamic Covenant. He took every word literally. He simply parsed the grammar very carefully, and pointed out something that had escaped the notice of the Jews. Paul did not employ Bro. Fields’ “dual fulfillment” hermeneutic, or allegory, to explain things away, as Bro. Fields and all amillennialists do. Rather, he carefully and diligently followed a “grammatical” interpretation of the promises to Abraham – that “Seed” was in fact singular and not plural, (v. 16). He then identified that “seed” as Christ, and included all who have been baptized into Him in “the inheritance” of Abraham.

## Conclusion

My opponent acknowledges that the Apostles held my view, even after forty days of intensive teaching by Jesus regarding His Kingdom after He had *“opened their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures,”* (Luke 24:45). Their concept of what it meant for Jesus to be “the Christ” was radically different than Bro. Fields’ concept. Amillennialists believe they understand Jesus’ teaching about “the Christ” and His Kingdom better than His own disciples, who were privy to all He said, including his forty days of focused teaching after His resurrection, none of which remains in writing. My opponent’s view logically requires that Peter’s good confession, that “Jesus is the Christ,” was essentially in error, because Peter’s concept of what it means to be “the Christ” was essentially in error, as demonstrated by the disciples’ question in Acts 1:6. He claims that Peter’s “hope” was suddenly changed on the Day of Pentecost. Where is the evidence of this alleged radical shift in their thinking? This new alleged hope mirrors the Gnostic beliefs of the time regarding the cosmic destiny,<sup>4</sup> the nature of “the Christ,” and the manner in which the Scriptures are explained away through allegory.<sup>5</sup> All this was brought into mainstream Christianity by Origen.<sup>6</sup> Essentially, amillennialism is the offspring of Gnosticism, and so is dispensationalism insofar as it maintains a cosmic destiny for the Church. Dispensationalism is simply a hybrid of Chiliasm and amillennialism.

Finally, there was one enormously glaring omission in his rebuttal – no mention at all of Psalm 37, which I quoted extensively, and which proves that the hope of the eternal land inheritance was still future from David’s perspective, while Israel was already living in the land under the conditional arrangement provided by the Law of Moses. Jesus Himself quoted from that psalm and applied its future promise to His followers, *“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the land,”* (Matt. 5:5). Does Bro. Fields think perhaps Jesus Himself was confused?

### Notes:

1. Wallace, Daniel B. Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics, “The infinitive is used to indicate the purpose or goal of the action or state of its controlling verb. It answers the question, “Why?” in that it looks ahead to the anticipated and intended result.” (p. 590).
2. See my article, The Source of Corruption of Apostolic Eschatology on the answersinrevelation.org website.
3. See my article, The Kingdom Hope in Hebrews on the answersinrevelation.org website.
4. Justin, Dialogue with Trypho, LXXX; Irenaeus, Against Heresies, Book I, XXII, 5; Book II, XXX, 5, 7; Book V, XIX, 2; Book V, XXXI, 2.
5. Irenaeus, Against Heresies, Book V, XXXV.
6. Origen, De Principis, Book II, XI, 5-7.