

On Earth As It Is In Heaven, Pt. 11
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(Based on Brian Mattson's series)
Christ In Paradox With Culture, Pt. 4

How does our heavenly citizenship relate to our earthly life?

Last week: Biblical Problems with N2K theology. 1: (My own 'argument from silence'): So where in the Bible do we find a common realm? In the Bible the 2 Kingdoms that are specifically mentioned are light/dark, and where the Bible describes Jesus' reign into one all-encompassing, comprehensive unity, N2K theology divides it into 2 *realms*, with differing concerns and administrations.

Biblical Problem 2: N2K men see the transition from creation to recreation as *cataclysmic*. (!) God's original creation is, and was always, destined for destruction. All reformed thinkers maintain that Adam and Eve were looking for something better and eternal (signified by the tree of life) (2), but in this view, moving from the one to the other entails the complete *passing away* of the other.

D V Drunen is emphatic about this. He writes: "The NT teaches that the natural order as it now exists will come to a radical end, and that the products of human culture will perish, along with the natural order." (3)

He cites many texts, but many of *those* texts use metallurgical analogies—blacksmith's forge stuff—heat, fire, purifying, winnowing. All descriptions of the final judgment. But those analogies don't speak of annihilation at all, they speak of transforming and cleansing! (4)

Romans 8:21: "...that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God."

"This, when creation groans for something better, for the glory that is coming, creation is not seeking an improvement of its present existence, but the attainment of its original destiny."

OK, right? And what is that original destiny?

"It longs to give way to the new Heavens and the new Earth, spoken of in 2 Pet. 3 and Rev. 21."

There it is—the liberation that creation is groaning for is the liberation of euthanasia. It wants to be put out of its misery. Paul just told us that creation longs to be "brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God."

Isaiah 55:12: "You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands."

Bursting into song and clapping their hands for their own immanent demise is what Van Drunen is saying. Paul is not teaching the destruction of creation, he's teaching the liberation of creation. (5)

If this dualism is followed out to its "X, Y, and Z", it will result in the denial of the resurrection of the body. After all, the body is a result of the creation. And yet, Paul says in vs. 23 that we also await the redemption of our earthly bodies, so this is all that DVDrun is willing to concede:

"Our earthly bodies are the only part of the present world that Scripture says will be transformed and taken up in the world to come."

This from a text that speaks of the whole creation's liberation and being brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

Just compare the two statements: Paul's and D V Drunen's. Stark difference. And what about our souls? Souls are already 'up there' and appropriate for heaven! Spirit/Matter Dualism is still lurking...

I believe that in this example the text is being squeezed into his dualism and not shaping it, and by his interpretation of it, creation and re-creation are in complete discontinuity with each other.

This discontinuity is also referred to (by VD) by the example of the flood as in 1 Pet. 3:20.

“As a foretaste of the last day, therefore, the flood indicates that the products of present human culture are doomed to destruction with the natural order itself.”

The flood is a paradigm for the coming judgment, and the flood destroyed everything.

What's wrong with the this assessment?

Kids—what made it through the flood?

The flood is not an example of total annihilation of creation, it's an example of God's gracious preservation and redemption of the created order, even in the midst of judgment. (6) The flood narrative simply doesn't teach what VD wants it to teach.

Another text that VD uses is Rev. 18, that vision of the utter destruction of 'Babylon', which he takes to symbolize as a picture of the final judgment. Let's just that question of VD's interpretation for a moment: The text says that all of the city's culture is destroyed: its economic markets, wealth, luxury, and power. VD likes to remind us that these are activities that even Xians also participate in.

“Like the Israelites that left their houses and gardens behind in Babylon to return to Jerusalem, so believers today await the time when they will see destroyed the activities and products of human culture to which they themselves contributed and they are welcomed into the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven.”

There's the analogy: Israel is in exile in Babylon, and when they leave to go home, they also leave everything in Babylon behind, and Rev. 18 is teaching the destruction of everything left behind.

I don't believe that the Babylon in Rev. 18 is describing a situation in which believers in Christ are participating.

This Babylon is described as the absolute enemy of, and the antithesis of, God's people. (7)

Babylonians worship the Beast, they bear the mark of the Beast, they make war against the Lamb, and they drink the blood of the saints.

Babylon in Rev. 18 does not represent Van Drunen's common realm at all—it represents the apex of evil—the kingdom of darkness in its fullness. (8) God is not destroying Babylon here because He's destroying culture (since it is, as VD says, destined for destruction), He's destroying Babylon here because its culture is utterly antichrist!

“Rejoice over her, O heaven! Rejoice, saints and apostles and prophets! God has judged her for the way she treated *you*.” (vs. 20). I don't agree with VD's interpretation of this Babylon as the 'common realm'.

The other irony of this is that the text says that the city is being destroyed for it's being an enemy of God.

What happened to the common realm being 'allegiance neutral'? This is the *last* passage I would muster to support a common realm, and the whole thrust of the passage is to say that culture is in no way neutral: It either submits to the King or Kings, or it makes war on the Lamb. (9)

Also, just 3 chapters later, we are told that in the New Jerusalem, “the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it” and “The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it.” (Rev. 21:23-24; 26)

VD declares that the 'honor and glory' referred to here is simply their worship and praise.

Why the aversion to aspects of the material world entering into glory?

I don't believe that he is reaching these conclusions from the text.