

A Disingenuous God? - Part 1

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More On Plain-Speaking

We are looking into the matter of plain-speaking. In theological discourse one strives for precision and tries to avoid ambiguity. However, the language of “expansion” found often on the lips of supercessionists – those who will insist that the OT prophets mean something OTHER than what their actual words convey – is, I believe, calculated to be ambiguous. The theology of replacement (i.e. one designated subject is replaced by another), ethnic Israel is now the church; the land is now the whole new earth, or heaven; Jerusalem is heaven; the throne of David is God’s throne; the future temple is Jesus, etc. This is not accurately defined by expansion terminology, and is more accurately described by “transformation” terminology.

1. I fully realize that in saying this I am charging some of these brothers with having less than pure motives. But I am not saying that these “iffy” motives are directed Godward. I am convinced that this is usually not the case. However, I am asserting that that the trouble comes from them not liking what the text of Scripture actually states in the clearest of terms in its context because it contradicts a cherished doctrinal proposition.

And it is disingenuous. Let me explain why. It is because when you point out to these people that “change” “alteration” “replacement” etc. are far more appropriate terms for what they claim is happening to OT prophecies and covenant oaths (and also far less ambiguous), they insist that that is what they are *not* doing!

2. It used to be that supercessionists would at least come clean about their views. They would tell everybody that they were spiritualizing the text (Oswald T. Allis), and that the Church had replaced the nation of Israel (John Gerstner). Today, many of them put things in such a way that one has to ask them more searching questions in order to find out what they actually mean. Fred Klett, for example, who we met in a previous post, wrote:

All of what God was doing in the Tenach (Old Testament) and all of the promises of God to bring redemption throughout the ages are centered in Jesus. "No matter how many promises God has made, they are "yes" in Messiah" (2 Cor. 1:20). God has something better in mind for the Jewish people, the \$1,000,000 rather than the \$10. Messiah offers the Jewish people (and Gentiles who believe) a greater redemption which makes the old look small in comparison.

These sorts of statements have been appearing ever since Robert Strimple’s essay, which we cited last time became known. Please notice what is allowed to stand and what must be altered.

Firstly, the promise of redemption must stay. We cannot change “redemption” into something else. We can’t make it a shadow of something else.

Second, this redemption is “centered in Jesus.” I totally agree. But I can do so because I take the Messianic predictions about the New Covenant at face value.

Third, 2 Corinthians 1:20, which in its context refers to the Apostolic ministry (“through us”), is being used to wipe away every OT prophecy causing trouble for the supercessionist. But it is not to be used as a permit which allows the interpreter to commute a covenant oath to Israel

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into a shadow-promise to the Church.

Fourth, contrasting the “greater redemption” with the “old” surely adds up to the *replacing* of the old with the new? Why, then, does Klett & co. not just say that?

Fifthly, one wonders how these folks got the inside scoop on what this “greater redemption” will look like. How does Klett or Strimple know “that God has something better in mind for the Jewish people”? What *does* God have in mind for them? Is it to be discovered by plain-sense hermeneutics? I think it is described in pretty solid terms as to the Millennium: hardly at all in reference to the New Heavens and Earth. But if this “greater redemption” is not described in plain language, how do these men *know* what it will be like? To pick up on something in the last article, how does Strimple know the kid gets the Ferrari? A Ferrari is a literal thing!

3. The whole idea stands or falls upon the premise that the interpretation of what the NT is SAYING forces one to go back to the OT and reject what it is SAYING. This means, among other things, that the OT cannot be understood rightly apart from the New.

From my point of view it seems ironic that a position which rejects the plain sense of passages like Jer. 33:14ff. or Ezek. 36-37; 40-48 would employ the word “expansion” in such a misleading way. Does the refusal to read the OT prophecies literally affect a person to such a degree that they refuse to speak plainly about their position? I do not say it does, but it appears that way sometimes.

Since this view must read these and many other promises first with an attitude of denial: no future Davidic throne on earth in Jerusalem; no future Levitical priesthood, no future temple, no allotment of land to ethnic Israel, no distinction between Israel and the Church – and then proceed with a *reinterpretation* which alters the original terms of the promises, I find the employment of anything other than “transformation-language” (“change” “replace” etc.) deserving of the name disingenuous.

While, *some* sort of “expansion” may be in view, it is clear that *a lot of replacement and change are envisaged*. This word “expansion” and its fellows (like “extension” and “fulfilled”) seems to have been adopted only recently by supercessionists to appear a bit more PC. But, just as the God proposed by this theology spoke misleadingly when He made covenant oaths (e.g. in Gen. 15; Num. 25; Jer. 33), so to use “expansion” without coming clean on other agendas (E.g. the Church = the new Israel) looks to many of us to be less than candid.

But the problem runs deeper than this. Something I shall discuss more fully next time.

The Equivocating “God” of “Expansionists”

An equivocation is basically a double-meaning. A word or phrase employed by Person A is taken to mean something different by Person B. It is often profitably utilized by con men. The thesaurus links it with words like duplicity, deceit, dissimulation, hedging, and casuistry. This is because in such meanings of the word lies an intent of the speaker to equivocate.

For me at any rate, the main issue is this: Does God mean what He says *where and when He says it*? If there are places in the prophetic Scriptures where His words point to one thing (e.g. a literal temple complex in Ezek. 40ff. or future restoration of Israel in the strict terms of Jer. 33:14-26, etc., etc.), but take on a *different* meaning at “fulfillment” then God was equivocating when He spoke the original words. If so, then this affects the doctrine of God itself. If it is in God’s **nature** to equivocate the question comes up, “How can God be trusted when He promises to save those who trust in His Son?”

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