

## Rebuttal of Norm Fields' "The One Hope of the Christian's Calling"

By Tim Warner (04/21/09)

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In beginning my rebuttal, I am compelled to first offer a brief summary of the previous round, and openly voice my objections to my opponent's tactics in his closing statement. Rather than Norm Fields dealing substantively with the issues I raised, he chose to engage in diversion, ignoring 85% of what I wrote, particularly in my response to his rebuttal. Fields chose instead to demolish his own fabricated caricature of my view. For example, he misrepresented my answer, that the Kingdom of God is present in a limited sense in the churches because Christ is reigning only over His own people, and not yet over the kings, lords, and nations of the world. They are mostly part of Satan's kingdom now, the "god of this age," (2 Cor. 4:4). This is not difficult to understand, and is thoroughly biblical, (Acts 26:18; Eph. 6:12; Col. 1:13; 1 Jn. 4:4-6; 5:19). In response to my answer, Fields gave a series of non-sequitur arguments and false dichotomies which have absolutely **nothing** to do with my statement. That the church is "God's eternal purpose," or that Christ "purchased His church with His own blood," or that Christ was "foreordained to be our sacrificial lamb from eternity," have nothing to do with my statement, and are all things I agree with. Fields then writes, "according to Warner, the blood of Christ was limited in its power to accomplish the eternal purpose of God." That is pure nonsense. Christ's sacrifice has the power to cleanse every sin of every human being. However God's plan of restoration (of both man and the creation) is progressive, and occurs in stages over an extended period of time. That in no way limits God's power.

Fields' closing paper consisted almost entirely of straw man arguments and red herrings, all intellectually dishonest debate tactics.<sup>1</sup> I can only assume that he was unable to respond to the major points I raised in round one. He prefers to misrepresent me, applying his litmus test to the straw men he fabricated, – "Any doctrinal position that requires Scriptural contradictions cannot be the true doctrine of Christ." It is Fields' interpretations that will fail under his own test, as I will demonstrate.

In formal debate, when one side ignores important points raised by the other side, they are considered established. Below are the major points I made that remain unrefuted, either by being ignored totally, or by ignoring my response to Fields' initial rebuttal.

## 1. The Personal, Eternal Land Promise to the Patriarchs Remains Unfulfilled

In the Abrahamic Covenant, God promised the eternal land inheritance to the Patriarchs themselves. The promise was made to Abraham, (Gen. 13:15), to Isaac (Gen. 26:3), and to Jacob, (Gen. 28:13). Yet, Stephen stated plainly that Abraham had not received what was promised, not even one square foot of the land, (Acts 7:5). Paul stated the same thing, and explained why the patriarchs have not yet received what was promised. *“And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.”* (Heb. 11:39-40). Paul indicated that we are the heirs of the promise God made to Abraham, (Heb. 6:13-19). Fields’ amillennialism has no answer for the “eternal” inheritance of the Promised Land. Israel’s possession of it was not “eternal,” nor have the patriarchs possessed any land whatsoever!

The best that Fields could conjure up was that Abraham was a representative of his own seed, and therefore he personally received the land inheritance in some mystical way when his descendants went into the land under Joshua. Yet, this does not remove the contradiction for Fields, because the promise was to Abraham himself AND (in addition) to his seed. Nor does it eliminate the “eternal” component of the promise. Fields says Abraham received all the land that was promised to him. Steven and Paul said he did not receive any of it. *“Any doctrinal position that requires Scriptural contradictions cannot be the true doctrine of Christ.”*

## 2. The Promised Land Inheritance will be made Permanent through Jesus Christ

In Galatians 3, Paul identified the “Seed” contained in the Abrahamic eternal Land promises as a singular entity – Christ, (Gal. 3:16). The clause “and to your seed” (και τω σπερματι σου) was quoted verbatim by Paul from Genesis 13:17 LXX, and appears again in Gen. 17:8 LXX, where the land inheritance is again called “everlasting” (αιωνιον<sup>2</sup>). These are the only two promises God gave to Abraham that contain the clause Paul quoted in Galatians 3, (και τω σπερματι σου). And in both, it was the eternal Land inheritance that was promised to Abraham, and also to His Seed.

Paul’s point was that the eternal Land inheritance promised to Abraham and to his “Seed” belongs to Israel that is “in Christ.” The conditions in the Law for keeping the land could not overturn the original promise, which was unconditional and eternal. *“What I am saying is this: the Law, which came four hundred and thirty years later, does not invalidate a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise. For if the inheritance is based on law, it is no longer based on a promise; but God has granted it to Abraham by means of a promise,”* (Gal. 3:17-18 NASB). The illusive permanence of the land inheritance remained a paradox for Israel, and was something for which she still hoped, as Paul demonstrated. *“And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise”*

*made by God to our fathers.* To this promise our twelve tribes, earnestly serving God night and day, hope to attain. For this hope's sake, King Agrippa, I am accused by the Jews" (Acts 26:6-7 NKJV). Jesus came to solve this paradox, by doing what the Law could not do. "And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, **that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance,**" (Heb. 9:15 NKJV). Fields contradicts the promises to the patriarchs, and Paul's interpretations of them. "Any doctrinal position that requires Scriptural contradictions cannot be the true doctrine of Christ."

### **3. The Eternal Land Inheritance was Future from David's Perspective**

I repeatedly brought up Psalm 37, and Fields repeatedly ignored it. This Psalm looks forward to the permanent fulfillment of the eternal land inheritance. "For evildoers shall be cut off; But those who wait on the LORD, **They shall inherit the [land]**, For yet a little while and the wicked shall be no more; Indeed, you will look carefully for his place, But it shall be no more. **But the meek shall inherit the [land]**, And shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace," (vss. 9-11). Verse 11 was quoted by Jesus and applied to His own disciples' future destiny, (Matt. 5:5). David continues: "The LORD knows the days of the upright, and **their inheritance shall be forever**," (v. 18). "For the LORD loves justice, And does not forsake His saints; They are preserved forever, But the descendants of the wicked shall be cut off. **The righteous shall inherit the land, And dwell in it forever**," (vss. 28-29). "Wait on the LORD, And keep His way, And **He shall exalt you to inherit the land; When the wicked are cut off, you shall see it**," (v. 34). All of these promises speak of the **future, permanent** inheritance of the Promised Land by the righteous. When this will occur is plainly stated, "when the wicked are cut off" (see: Matt. 13:40-43), that is when "you shall see it" (the permanent land inheritance). These promises were made while David was living in the Land under the Law. Fields contradicts all this. "Any doctrinal position that requires Scriptural contradictions cannot be the true doctrine of Christ."

### **4. The Hope of Jesus' Apostles was the same as David's and Abraham's Hope**

Jesus' own Apostles held David's hope, articulated in the 37<sup>th</sup> Psalm, at the time of Jesus' ascension to heaven, (Acts 1:6). And Fields has acknowledged this.<sup>3</sup> Yet, with no supporting evidence, he insisted that on Pentecost the Holy Spirit completely overthrew the Apostles' hope and substituted a hope of heaven. Now Fields claims that the Jewish heretic, Cerinthus, invented premillennialism! Fields cannot have it both ways.

### **5. The Post-Pentecost Hope was the same as The Pre-Pentecost Hope**

I proved from Peter's post-Pentecostal sermon in Acts 3 that the hope offered new Jewish converts was the return of Jesus Christ and the "restoration of all things." I proved from Romans 8:21 that "the creation **itself also** will be delivered from the bondage of corruption," and that we were saved in "this hope."

Fields has mostly ignored these things. Yes, in his first rebuttal, he tried to overturn a couple of them. But, his alternate explanations were shown to be impossible, because they could not relieve the grammatical hurdle to his view. A promise to Abraham **AND** to his seed cannot be fulfilled **ONLY** by the seed. Likewise, the promise of restoration for our bodies, and **ALSO** “the creation itself” cannot be fulfilled without the same restoration of our bodies being applied to the whole creation. In his closing argument, Fields seems to have abandoned all attempts to deal with the issues I raised, and instead put on a show of demolishing straw men. Fields has not even attempted a serious refutation of most of these points.<sup>4</sup> Why? It is because he can't. They are true. And truth is a stubborn thing.

### **A Word about Presuppositions**

The Greeks believed that the material creation was inherently corrupt, because matter itself was corrupt. This is why they balked at the idea of the resurrection of the body. A reanimated body would still consist of matter, and consequently still be as corrupt as it was before death. The Greeks had a vertical hope, looking for a destiny among the gods in the heavens, and an existence that was entirely “spiritual” and non-material.<sup>5</sup>

The Jews had a horizontal hope based on the Jewish Scriptures. God called the physical creation, “very good.” They looked for the restoration of the physical creation and resurrection of the material body in the “age to come.” They longed for the permanence of the Land inheritance God promised Abraham, the restoration of the Davidic Dynasty through the coming Messiah of the seed of David, and the restoration of Jerusalem and her people promised from Isaiah to Malachi.

As the Gospel spread among the Greeks, the Apostles thoroughly grounded the earliest Gentile Christians in the pristine Faith, and overturned their pagan presuppositions. A good example is Paul's lengthy discourse on the resurrection of the body in 1 Corinthians 15. Some of the Corinthians were viewing the Gospel through their Greek philosophy and presuppositions, and consequently denied the whole concept of the resurrection of the body of flesh. Paul corrected them by taking this reasoning to its logical conclusion. If the flesh does not rise, then Christ did not rise. Consequently, all of the Apostles' eyewitness testimonies to Jesus' resurrection were lies, and the entire message of Christianity is false. Strangely enough, Fields holds the same erroneous view of the resurrection as the Corinthians! Fields denies the concept of the resurrection of the flesh, not overtly, but by redefining the term “resurrection” to mean something completely foreign to the word itself, or its biblical usage. The same quandary exists for Fields as it did for the Corinthians. Both are logically forced to deny the resurrection of Christ's flesh in order to maintain their new definition of “resurrection.” We can turn the same hypothetical argument Paul used against the Corinthians against Fields.

As the Gospel and the New Testament documents spread beyond the scope of personal Apostolic instruction, into areas heavily saturated by Greek philosophy and paganism, the new Faith was increasingly viewed through a Greek philosophical lens. Consequently, statements in the New Testament that could potentially be interpreted in agreement with the pagan vertical hope (albeit misunderstood), were claimed as “proof” of this Greek worldview. And statements that clearly were in conflict with the Greek worldview were simply overthrown using the device that had been perfected in the mystery religions, “allegorical interpretation.” Origen was a master at this. The most extreme form of this process resulted in Gnosticism. But, lesser forms of the same kind of thinking penetrated Christianity and became the foundation of amillennialism. It developed rather quickly after the death of John (thanks largely to Origen and his Alexandrian school). And by the fourth century, it was fully systematized by Augustine, and adopted into mainstream Christianity. It gave credibility to the new church – state monstrosity constructed by Constantine. Amillennialism became the perfect vehicle for denying the future reign of Christ on earth so that Rome could claim to be the “Kingdom,” and the “Vicar of Christ” could usurp the role of Christ the King.

Fields has demonstrated, in his opening argument of this round, the very same Greek thinking that was the foundation of Gnosticism. He has the same presuppositions, redefines the same words in the same way the Gnostics did, and gives the same Gnostic interpretations of critical passages of Scripture. His Gnostic presuppositions are glaringly obvious throughout his paper, particularly in his claim that our hope is not “physical,” but “spiritual,” implying a false dichotomy between these terms. This is pure “dualism,” developed through the pagan mystery religions and Greek philosophy.

### **One Hope of Your Calling**

Fields’ opening argument begins with an appeal to the “one hope of your calling.” He writes, “Mr. Warner believes that the Christian's hope is an earthly kingdom. It is my task in this paper to demonstrate the eternal salvation of heaven as the Christian's one hope.” I need to correct one misconception in this statement. I do not believe in a future “earthly kingdom,” but a future “heavenly kingdom” located on the earth.

Fields begins his task by attempting to identify the resurrection with the “one hope of your calling.” Who can disagree that the resurrection is part of our hope? I believe his purpose for this line of reasoning was to establish that the “one hope of your calling” can only have a single component. He then seeks to identify the resurrection with that one component, thereby excluding the eternal land inheritance. The problem is, logically, this would also eliminate heaven, rewards, and even Christ Himself from Fields’ own “hope.” Fields’ entire line of reasoning in the first five pages can be shown to be false by simply showing that his premise is false.

*Eph 4:4-6*

*4 There is **one body** and one Spirit, just as you were called in **one hope of your calling**;  
5 one Lord, **one faith**, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is above all, and  
through all, and in you all.*

Of this list of things that all true Christians have in common, “one body” and “one Faith” each consist of many component parts. Paul made a point of showing that the “one body” consists of many members. “For as ***the body is one and has many members***, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ,” (1 Cor. 12:12). Likewise, the “one Faith” consists of many points of doctrine. It is “one” because it is viewed as a collective whole, with complete internal harmony and consistency, and received by all true Christians. There is simply no reason to think that “one hope of your calling” in this list is any different.

Of course, the resurrection is a central component of our “hope,” because it is at the resurrection that our inheritance will be realized (regardless of our destination). That is why several Scriptures connect the resurrection with our hope. But it is not the only component. In 1 Tim. 1:1, Paul referred to Christ himself as “our hope.” In Titus 2:13, the “glorious appearing” of Christ is our “blessed hope.” In Hebrews 6:13-19, the promise God made to Abraham is “the hope set before us.” And, as I have repeatedly pointed out, that promise was the eternal inheritance of the Promised Land.

There is a well established pattern in Scripture that when several components are viewed as a whole, the mention of just one of them stands for the whole. The best example of this is salvation. We agree that repentance, faith, confession, and baptism are all a part of the process. Yet, Jesus and the Apostles frequently used ONE of these to stand for the whole, (Matt. 9:13; John 3:16; Acts 5:31; Rom. 1:5; Rom. 3:28; Rom. 10:10; Gal. 3:27; 2 Pet. 3:9; etc.). In John 3:16, when Jesus said, “Whoever believes in Him should not perish,” He did not exclude repentance, confession, or baptism. He simply used believing to stand for the whole process. Therefore, why would we expect anything different regarding the “one hope of your calling?”

### **A Spiritual or Physical Hope**

In this section, Fields clearly reveals his Gnostic, dualistic presuppositions which drive his entire system. His title, which falsely presents “spiritual” and “physical” as being mutually exclusive, is precisely the error that the Gnostics held. Irenaeus, the chief opponent of Gnosticism in the second century, explained the orthodox view in opposition to this, and the true meaning of “spiritual.”

“Man ... whom also the apostle terms “spiritual,” they being spiritual because they partake of the Spirit, and not because their flesh has been stripped off and taken away, and because they have become purely spiritual. For if any one take away the substance of flesh, that is, of the handiwork of God, and understand that which is purely spiritual, such then would not be a spiritual man but would be the spirit of a man, or the Spirit of God. But when the Spirit here blended with the soul is united to God’s handiwork [the body of flesh], the man is rendered spiritual and perfect because of the outpouring of the Spirit, and this is he who was made in the image and likeness of God.”<sup>6</sup>

Fields is not content with only redefining the word “spiritual” to make it conform to his Gnostic dualism. He also follows the Gnostics by redefining the word “resurrection” itself. In Fields eschatology, “resurrection” no longer has anything to do with the body of flesh that was put into the grave, but refers to a different existence that is non material, with no connection whatsoever to the former flesh created by God. So, in effect, what Fields has done by redefining the term “resurrection” is **denied the resurrection of the flesh**, the very thing he calls “one hope of your calling!”

The word “resurrection” itself will not permit this mutilation. “Αναστασις” is a compound of “ανα” (again) and “στασις” (to stand). It refers to the body of flesh, which has fallen in death, standing **once again** in life. The prefix “ανα” (again) refers to a repeated action or state, the state of “standing.” Therefore, the thing which has fallen in death (the body) is the very thing that will once again “stand.” Fields’ “resurrection” is more like “reincarnation,” without the “carn.” It is the same as the Gnostics’ hope.

Before I examine the Scriptures Fields uses to carry out this subterfuge, let me clearly define what the resurrection of the flesh is, based on clear statements of the Bible. The first mention of the resurrection was made by Job.

*Job 19:25-27 NKJV*

*25 For I know that my Redeemer lives, And He shall stand at last on the earth;*

*26 And **after my skin is destroyed**, this I know, That **in my flesh I shall see God**,*

*27 Whom **I shall see for myself**, And **my eyes shall behold**, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!*

This is hardly a description of a “spiritual” resurrection that Fields proposes. It is most definitely a resurrection of the flesh, the same physical body that was put in the grave. There is a reason why the Scripture indicates that the graves will be opened at the resurrection, (Isaiah 26:19; Dan. 12:2; John 5:28-29). Consider Ezekiel’s graphic description of the resurrection.

Ezekiel 37:7-14

7 So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and suddenly a rattling; **and the bones came together, bone to bone.** 8 Indeed, as I looked, **the sinews and the flesh came upon them, and the skin covered them over;** but there was no breath in them.

9 Also He said to me, "Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live.'"" 10 So I prophesied as He commanded me, **and breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet,** an exceedingly great army.

11 Then He said to me, "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They indeed say, 'Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, and we ourselves are cut off!' 12 Therefore prophesy and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, O My people, **I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves,** and bring you into the land of Israel. 13 Then you shall know that I am the LORD, **when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up from your graves.** 14 I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken it and performed it," says the LORD.'"

Here, Ezekiel was given a vision of the "whole house of Israel," from Jacob to the Babylonian captivity, crying out from their graves because the eternal nature of the land promise to the patriarchs had apparently failed! Yet, as we see elsewhere, the promise of the land is indeed "eternal," and will ultimately be fulfilled by means of the resurrection of the flesh. This resurrection is not the mythological "spiritual resurrection" Fields proposes, but the reconstruction and reanimation of the physical bodies of flesh that died, bone coming together with bone, and the flesh being reconstructed by God.

Jesus will "change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body," (Phil 3:21 KJV). When He comes, "we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is," (1 Jn. 3:2 NKJV). So, in order to understand whether the resurrection is "physical," one only need look at Jesus' resurrection. When Jesus appeared, He assured His frightened disciples that He was not a phantom ("spiritual" in Field's jargon). He consisted of physical "flesh and bone," the same two elements mentioned in Ezekiel's prophecy.

Luke 24:39-43 NKJV

39 Behold My hands and My feet, that **it is I Myself.** Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have **flesh and bones** as you see I have."

40 When He had said this, He showed them **His hands and His feet.** 41 But while they still did not believe for joy, and marveled, He said to them, "Have you any food here?"



42 So they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish and some honeycomb. 43 And **He took it and ate in their presence.**

Jesus' whole point was to demonstrate the exact opposite of Fields' claims! His resurrected body consisted of "flesh and bones." He later invited Thomas to put his finger in the holes in his hands, and thrust his hand into the gaping hole in His side, all remnants of His crucifixion. That resurrection of Jesus' physical body was necessary to fulfill God's promise to David. "...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**," (Acts 2:30). The flesh body descended from David must sit on David's throne. This is proof that the resurrection is of the same physical body that died, albeit with new physical properties. Our bodies will be just like His resurrected body.

### **The Timing of the Resurrection**

Fields argued that all the dead will be "resurrected" at the same time, and cites two passages in support.

*Acts 24:15*

*15 I have hope in God, which they themselves also accept, that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust.*

*John 5:28-30*

*28 Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice 29 and come forth — those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.*

Acts 24:15 gives no indication that the just and unjust will be raised at the same time. No doubt Fields thinks that "hour" in John 5:28 requires that both resurrections occur at the same time. He is mistaken. The grammar requires no such thing. The Greek text does not have the definite article before "hour." Jesus was using the term "hour" generally, not specifically or narrowly. Also, Jesus had just used the same expression just a few verses before, revealing His meaning. "**Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is**, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live." (v. 25). Here, Jesus used "the dead" as a metaphor for the lost. And the "hour" refers to this entire age of the Gospel being proclaimed. It was not the hour of the resurrection of the flesh, but the salvation of souls. Since Jesus called the present age of the Gospel, covering two millennia, an "hour," why would calling one millennium an "hour" be a problem for premillennialism? But, more importantly, Jesus called these two resurrections by two different names, each time repeating the word, "resurrection." His use of two completely separate statements, using the word "resurrection" twice,

implies He was distinguishing between resurrections. Whether this distinction points to timing, nature, or both cannot be ascertained from the text. However, supposing that they are distinct in time is a perfectly valid interpretation of the Greek grammar. There is nothing that grammatically requires that both occur at the same instant.

That Fields is mistaken about there being only a single resurrection is proven by passages that separate the resurrection of the just from the resurrection of the unjust **in time**. The most explicit is Revelation 20. But, I'll leave that passage alone for now. It will take too much space, and a separate round ought to be devoted to it since it figures so prominently in the millennial question. However, I would like to bring up two others, one from the Old Testament and one from the New.

*Dan 12:2 NASB*

*2 Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, **these** to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt.*

Notice the word, "many." In the context, Daniel was being shown the events of the end of the age (contrary to Fields' previous claims that the Old Testament makes no mention of the second coming of Christ). The word "many" in this context means a significant number from among a larger group. The larger group is identified as those who "sleep in the dust" (all the dead). The word "many" limits the verb "awake" to only a portion of this group, **thereby excluding the rest of the dead**. The pronoun "these" includes ALL who "awake." Therefore, **all who awake in this resurrection go to everlasting life**. This resurrection cannot include the damned.

*Phil 3:10-11 NKJV*

*10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, 11 if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.*

The underlined clause above in Greek is, "την **ἐξ**ανάστασιν την **ἐκ** νεκρῶν" (lit. "the out-from-resurrection, the out-from the dead ones." It is significant that Paul prefixed the preposition ἐκ/ἐξ to the Greek word for resurrection, "ανάστασιν." The preposition "ἐκ/ἐξ" literally means "out of the midst of." It describes the direction of motion of separating (in space or class) the subject (Paul) away from among the object of the preposition, "the dead ones." He then repeated the preposition again, making it crystal clear that this "resurrection" he sought to attain involved leaving behind the object of the preposition (the dead ones). It means that Paul expected to be separated from the class of the "dead ones" by the action involved in this "out-from-resurrection." This separation is the essential feature of the resurrection to which he alluded, because he

even coined a new term, *εξ-αναστασιν*. There will be many left “dead” at this resurrection. We could properly translate this as follows: “If by any mean I may attain to the resurrection out from among the rest of the dead ones.”

Fields next writes this about Matt. 25.

*According to Mr. Warner, the one will enter into an eternal earthly kingdom. But wouldn't that mean that the “damnation” would also have to be a physical, material, damnation? Will Warner say that the damned will spend eternity in a physical, material, lake of fire?*

Yes, Mr. Fields, I will most definitely say that the damned will spend eternity in a physical, material lake of fire. Otherwise, what is the point of the “resurrection of the unjust?”

### **John 14:1-3**

Fields next quoted John 14:1-3, and said this: “Warner will, no doubt, say that the place prepared is yet in the future and refers to an earthly kingdom, a material place for a physical existence. However, such a response is not accurate to the statement of the text, nor will it hold up under the contrast between the two distinct destinies for those raised - life or damnation.” Yet, he offered no evidence to justify his conclusion. He just declares it so. This passage supports premillennialism if you do not impose Fields’ Gnostic presuppositions upon it, as I will demonstrate.

When Jesus said, “*in My Father’s house are many dwelling places, I go to prepare a place for you,*” He used a phrase very familiar to His Jewish disciples. Jesus had used the phrase “my Father’s house” before in their presence, and they took special note of it.

*John 2:15-17 NKJV*

*15 When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of **the temple**, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers’ money and overturned the tables. 16 And He said to those who sold doves, “Take these things away! **Do not make My Father’s house a house of merchandise!**” 17 Then His disciples remembered that it was written, “Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up.” [see also Luke 2:49 NIV-NASB]*

“My Father’s house” referred to the Temple in Jerusalem in Jesus’ jargon. The term, “the house of the LORD,” appears 375 times in the Old Testament. It refers to the physical building on earth where the Jews worshipped, including the Tabernacle of Moses, Solomon’s Temple, Zerrubbabel’s Temple, and the future Temple described by Ezekiel. And in the above passage, Jesus referred to Zerrubbabel’s Temple then standing in

Jerusalem that Herod had enlarged. Not once in all of Scripture do we find “heaven” being referred to as God’s “house.” Of course, Paul used the term “house” and “temple” as metaphors for the churches, because God’s Spirit dwells in the churches. But, Jesus could not have been referring to this metaphor, otherwise He indicated He was going to prepare a place in the church for the church, a nonsensical statement.

Our interpretation no doubt raises some questions, like, “what are the ‘many dwelling places’ that Jesus spoke about if He was referring to the Temple in Jerusalem?” The answer is simple. There were many little apartments attached to the Temple structure on both the north and south sides. These were dwellings for the priests who ministered in the things of God. Those serving would live there apart from their families during their course of service. Zacharias, John the Baptist’s father, lived in one during his rotation of Temple duties, (Luke 1:5-9, 23). Josephus was an eye witness to the same Temple with which the disciples were familiar. Here is his description.

"But the inmost part of the temple of all was of twenty cubits. This was also separated from the outer part by a veil. In this there was nothing at all. It was inaccessible and inviolable, and not to be seen by any; and was called the Holy of Holies. **Now, about the sides of the lower part of the temple, there were little houses, with passages out of one into another; there were a great many of them, and they were of three stories high; there were also entrances on each side into them from the gate of the temple.** But the superior part of the temple had no such little houses any further, because the temple was there narrower, and forty cubits higher, and of a smaller body than the lower parts of it. Thus we collect that the whole height, including the sixty cubits from the floor, amounted to a hundred cubits."<sup>7</sup>

The disciples were quite familiar with these many three story apartments that were attached to the sides of “My Father’s house.” Therefore, when Jesus said, “in My Father’s house are many dwelling places,” this is precisely what would enter their minds, particularly since they heard Him call the Temple “My Father’s House” when He evicted the moneychangers. When Jesus said, “*I am going to make ready a place for you,*” they understood that He was going to evict the present priesthood and make ready for His disciples to occupy these homes when He came again “to receive you unto Myself.” A careful study of Jesus’ parable of the wicked vinedressers in Mathew 21:33-45 will show that it concerned this very thing, the evicting of the present priesthood from the Temple and replacing it with His own disciples in His Kingdom. Jesus loudly proclaimed this parable right on the Temple mount, within earshot of those very apartments in which the priests were living. Ezekiel, when describing the Kingdom Temple, described the many three story apartments, called “chambers.”

*Ezekiel 41:6 NKJV*

*6 The side chambers were in three stories, one above the other, thirty chambers in each story; they rested on ledges which were for the side chambers all around, that they might be supported, but not fastened to the wall of the temple.*

Notice also that Jesus used the present tense, “*in My Father’s house **are** many dwelling places.*” Not only did the Temple have these three story apartments (which the disciples had seen), but so too would the rebuilt Temple from which Jesus and His Apostles will rule! He assured them of this fact. This future Temple is where they will “*eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel,*” (Luke 2:30). This is where Jesus will once again celebrate the Passover with His disciples, (cf. Ezek. 45:21 & Luke 22:15-16).

Fields might object that those apartments cannot accommodate all the redeemed. True enough, at least not all at once. But, neither can the “twelve thrones,” upon which the Apostles will sit to judge the twelve tribes of Israel, accommodate the rest of the redeemed, (Matt 19:28). Both statements were promised to Jesus’ disciples, not believers in general. There are special privileges for a select few, (Mark 10:35-40, Rev. 3:21).

### **1 Corinthians 15**

Fields next cites 1 Cor. 15:50-55, “*flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.*” By this statement, Fields attempts to show that the resurrection is not physical, and apparently, that neither is the “Kingdom of God.” Irenaeus informs us that this was precisely the interpretation of the Gnostics, in their attempt to overturn the resurrection of the body.

“Among the other [truths] proclaimed by the apostle, there is also this one, ‘That flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.’ This is [the passage] which is adduced by all the heretics in support of their folly, with an attempt to annoy us, and to point out that the handiwork of God [the flesh] is not saved.”<sup>8</sup>

Fields apparently has no shame in boldly promoting the ancient heresies of the Gnostics, calling it the “true doctrine of Christ,” as he mutilates these words of the Apostles Paul. It is plain, in the context of these verses, that Paul meant “**corruptible**” flesh and blood cannot inherit the coming Kingdom. The reason is obvious. How can a natural man who lives only 70-80 years inherit an eternal Kingdom? The clause “flesh and blood” in no sense implies that Paul was speaking about non-material vs. material bodies. That is one of Fields’ Gnostic presuppositions that he is imposing on the text. When the context clearly defines the “flesh and blood” as “corruptible” flesh and blood, there is no reason for Paul to use the adjective “corruptible” again in this same clause. It is already established. It is the same when he wrote, “for this corruption must put on

incorruption.” He did not need to say, “for this corruption OF FLESH must put on incorruption,” because it is understood already that the “corruption” was of the flesh.

Fields then cites verses 42-44, where Paul referred to the resurrected body as a “spiritual body.” But, he missed the point entirely, because of his Gnostic presuppositions regarding the meaning of the word, “spiritual.” Fields, just like the Gnostics, believes “spiritual” means non physical or non material. That is not the meaning of “spiritual.” This term almost always simply refers to things assisted by the Spirit and power of God, as opposed to the things of the natural man. It says absolutely nothing about whether something is made of matter or not. For example, Paul wrote in the previous chapter, “*If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or **spiritual**, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord,*” (1 Cor. 14:36-37). He did not mean to address his remarks to those who considered themselves ghosts floating around in a non-material form. “Spiritual” here refers to a physical person whose mind has been renewed by the Spirit. A “spiritual body” is a physical body that has been transformed by the power of the Spirit (resurrected), as opposed to a natural body that has not yet been transformed.

*Rom 8:11 NKJV*

*11 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead **will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.***

Notice, Paul did not say that you will receive a completely different non-material body. Rather, the Spirit dwelling in our body will reanimate our “mortal (old) body.” Fields consistently ignores past precedent for interpreting words and phrases, and insists on imposing his Gnostic dualism onto the text. There is no such thing as a “body” that is non-material. That is a figment of the Gnostic imagination. A “body” is physical by definition! In the following quotation, Irenaeus refuted the Gnostics whom Fields is parroting in this passage.

“But what is that which, like a grain of wheat, is sown in the earth and decays, unless it be the bodies which are laid in the earth, into which seeds are also cast? And for this reason he said, “**It is sown** in dishonor, **it rises** in glory.” For what is more ignoble than dead flesh? Or, on the other hand, what is more glorious than the same when it arises and partakes of incorruption? “**It is sown** in weakness, **it is raised** in power:” in its own weakness certainly, because since it is earth it goes to earth; but [it is quickened] by the power of God, who raises it from the dead. “It is sown an animal body, **it rises a spiritual body.**” He has taught, beyond all doubt, that **such language was not used by him, either with reference to the**

**soul or to the spirit, but to bodies that have become corpses.** For these are animal bodies, that is, [bodies] which partake of life, which when they have lost, they succumb to death; **then, rising through the Spirit's instrumentality, they become spiritual bodies, so that by the Spirit they possess a perpetual life.**"<sup>9</sup>

Fields next writes:

*"The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man (1 Cor. 15:47-49, NKJV).*

"Clearly and irrefutably, the resurrection from the dead - the one hope of the gospel's call - is a resurrection to a spiritual existence, not a physical one."

This is pure Gnostic dualism! Fields is injecting his Gnostic presuppositions into the text, missing Paul's point and coming up with a conclusion that is as foreign to Paul as Hinduism is to Christ. What does the passage actually say, when we take off our "Fields glasses?" It says that Adam (and by extension, our natural body) was made of dust. We agree. The "second Man" (Jesus) is from heaven. We agree. Paul equated the non-resurrected person with Adam, and the resurrected person with Christ (who was resurrected by the Spirit). Therefore, all we need to do to understand whether the "spiritual body" of the resurrection will be physical or non physical is to look at Christ's body after His resurrection. Fields' Gnostic presuppositions must logically force him to take the next step into full blown Gnosticism, and actually deny the physical bodily resurrection of Jesus, because we will be like Him in the resurrection! That is the logical outcome of consistent amillennialism!

### **Where Will the Resurrected Reside**

Fields then quotes 1 Cor. 15:20-24, and claims: "So the where of this spiritual existence is where God the Father resides!" But, this is a non sequitur. The passage does not say what Fields claims, nor where the Father resides in the Kingdom. Fields quoted several Old Testament passages that refer to heaven as God's "dwelling place." But, the place where the Father resides now is not the place He will reside in the coming Kingdom. God is moving His Throne permanently to earth, as is stated plainly in several passages.

Ezekiel saw God on His Throne, (Ezek. 1). But, He was not in heaven. His Throne had been transported by the four creatures to Ezekiel's location beside the Chebar River. Later, during the vision of the future Kingdom Temple, he was told the following:

Ezekiel 43:1-7

1 Afterward he brought me to the gate, the gate that faces toward the east. 2 And behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east. His voice was like the sound of many waters; and the earth shone with His glory. 3 It was like the appearance of the vision which I saw — like the vision which I saw when I came to destroy the city. The visions were like the vision which I saw by the River Chebar; [the vision of God on His portable Throne in chapter 1] and I fell on my face. 4 And the glory of the LORD came into the temple by way of the gate which faces toward the east. 5 The Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of the LORD filled the temple.

6 Then I heard Him speaking to me from the temple, while a man stood beside me. 7 And He said to me, "Son of man, this is the place of My throne and the place of the soles of My feet, where I will DWELL in the midst of the children of Israel forever."

Jeremiah concurs with Ezekiel.

Jeremiah 3:16-17

16 "Then it shall come to pass, when you are multiplied and increased in the land in those days," says the LORD, "that they will say no more, 'The ark of the covenant of the LORD.' It shall not come to mind, nor shall they remember it, nor shall they visit it, nor shall it be made anymore."

17 "At that time Jerusalem shall be called The Throne of the LORD, and all the nations shall be gathered to it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem. No more shall they follow the dictates of their evil hearts."

The latter passage states plainly that the Ark of the Covenant, which rested in the Most Holy Place, will be replaced by the Throne of the Lord in Jerusalem. All nations will come to Jerusalem to worship. God dwells in Jerusalem, not heaven, in the coming Kingdom! Revelation agrees that God will come to live here permanently.

Rev 21:3-4 NKJV

3 And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God."

Next, Fields writes:

"How many times does the Bible have to tell us what Christians have "in heaven" before we believe that Christians will be "in heaven"?

- The Christian's reward is "in heaven" (Matt. 5:12; Lk. 6:23).
- The Christian's treasures are laid up "in heaven" (Matt. 6:20; 19:21).



- The Christian's citizenship is "in heaven" (Phil. 3:30). [sic]
- The Christian's hope is laid up "in heaven" (Col. 1:5).
- Christians are registered "in heaven" (Heb. 12:23).
- The Christian's inheritance is reserved "in heaven" (1 Pet. 1:4).

The Christian has all of these things "in heaven" but Warner says the Christian is going to live on earth. Make sense of it if you can!"

The struggle Fields is having making sense of Scripture is because he holds faulty presuppositions. Let me help Fields make some sense from his list. The first two, fourth, and sixth bullet points say essentially the same thing, that our rewards are stored in heaven. What does that have to do with our destiny or residence being there? If a father told his children that their Christmas presents are stored in the attic, does that mean they are going to live forever in the attic? It only does in Fields' Gnostic world view. Again, Fields only has non sequitur arguments, because there is NOTHING in Scripture to indicate our eternal destiny is heaven! When Jesus returns to earth from heaven, He is going to bring all the rewards that have been "laid up" in heaven. He said so plainly.

*Rev 22:12-13 NKJV*

*"And behold, I am coming quickly, and **My reward is with Me**, to give to every one according to his work.*

Regarding his third point, Phil 3:20, "our citizenship is in heaven," "citizenship" does not imply residence or destiny. The Greek scholar, A. T. Robertson wrote:

*"Paul was proud of his Roman citizenship and found it a protection. The Philippians were also proud of their Roman citizenship. But Christians are citizens of a kingdom not of this world (Joh\_18:36). Milligan (Vocabulary) doubts if commentators are entitled to translate it here: "We are a colony of heaven," because such a translation reverses the relation between the colony and the mother city. But certainly here Paul's heart is in heaven."<sup>10</sup>*

Robertson was a dispensationalist, who, like Fields, believed Christians have an eternal destiny in heaven. But he didn't see it in this passage. Greek scholar, Gerhard Kittle, an amillennialist, writes: *"the word is used to describe their membership of the heavenly kingdom of Christ, to which they belong as it were by constitutional right."<sup>11</sup>* Note, it describes a **present relationship** to Christ's authority, not a future destiny or residence. The term has nothing whatever to do with residence, now or future. Paul also had a Roman citizenship. But this only implied that he had special privileges granted by Rome, not that he lived there, or would retire there.

The fifth bullet point, Heb. 12:23, that our names are “registered in heaven” only refers to the book of life, containing the names of the redeemed. It says nothing about destiny.

## **No Earthly Hope**

Fields writes:

“It is a common aspect of the various forms of Premillennialism to have Christ living on this earth once more. However, such an idea simply cannot be harmonized with biblical doctrine. We’ve already looked at several passages describing what Christ will do when he comes back. He will:

- Raise the dead (Jn. 5:28, 29).
- Change the living in the twinkling of an eye from physical to spiritual (1 Cor. 15:51, 52).
- Call us before his judgment seat (2 Cor. 5:10).
- Separate between the wicked and the righteous (Matt. 25:31-46).
- Cast the wicked into condemnation (Jn. 5:29).
- Take the righteous back to heaven to ever be with him there (Jn. 5:29; 1 Cor. 15:24; 1 Thess. 4:17).

There is no earthly hope here! Not only is no earthly hope described in Christ’s second coming, but the very opposite is revealed. When Christ returns the second time it will be the end of material existence!”

The only bullet point above that precludes the hope I have outlined is the last one. Yet, that mythological “hope,” to “take the righteous back to heaven,” has been strangely illusive in all of the texts that Fields has presented! It can only be seen if you impose it on the text, and assume what you are trying to prove, as Fields does consistently. I have already proven that the first two do not say what Fields claims. That leaves 1 Thess. 4:17. Yet, where does this passage mention heaven? It only says that we will “ever be with the Lord” when He returns **from** heaven. The destination is not stated or implied. Fields has not shown a single Scripture that states or implies a destiny in heaven, when the language is understood from Scriptural precedent (rather than words and phrases being reinterpreted to conform with Gnostic dualism).

## **The Destruction of the Earth and All Physical Matter**

Fields cites 2 Peter 3 as proof that all of this present creation will be utterly destroyed. But, once again, he fails to consider context as well as past precedent for the terminology Peter used. Peter stated his intention for writing, *“that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets,”* (v. 2). That ought to be the first clue to the reader that Peter’s words cannot be taken in isolation from the Old Testament prophecies he was citing, as Fields clearly does.

### The Context of 2 Peter 3

Let's take a closer look at the context. In verses 3-9, Peter was addressing the question of the apparent delay in Christ's return. He wrote that many scoffers would appear saying, "Where is the promise of His coming?" (v. 4). He then compared these people with those of Noah's day, who scoffed at the approaching flood. He referred to the pre flood earth as "the heavens of old, and the earth" (v. 5). Again, he referred to the pre-flood world as "the world that then existed." Should we understand that the world (heavens and earth) of Noah's day no longer exist? That is clearly not the case. Peter then said that it "perished, being flooded with water." (v. 6). In what sense did it "perish?" Did it pass out of existence? Hardly. Rather, its **form** and **order** perished, but its substance remained. Peter continued by referring to the present world as "the heavens and the earth which are now," (v. 7). Peter's terminology regarding the present creation excludes "the heavens and the earth" of Noah's day. Does this imply that the physical substance of the present heavens and earth did not exist in Noah's day? No. It is the order and form of the world that passed away in the flood. Peter concluded that the present heavens and earth "are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men," (v. 7). It is clear that Peter spoke of the flood in language that could be interpreted to mean the total destruction of the earth, and that the present earth and heavens are different earth and heavens from what existed in Noah's day. But that is obviously not what happened. "For the **form** of this world is passing away" (1 Cor 7:31), not its material substance. And this is true of all passages that speak of heaven and earth "passing away."

### The Biblical Meaning of "Heaven" and "Earth"

One of the major reasons Fields misunderstands this passage is because he does not "call Bible things by Bible names." Rather, he injects foreign meanings into Bible words and phrases. The word "earth" does NOT refer to the planet we call "earth." The ancients had no concept that we live on a planet. And this planet was first called "earth" long after the Bible was written. We must use God's definition of the terms, heaven, earth, and sea, the three divisions of our world.

*Gen 1:8-10 NKJV*

*8 And **God called the firmament Heaven**. So the evening and the morning were the second day.*

*9 Then God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear"; and it was so. 10 And **God called the dry land Earth**, and the gathering together of **the waters He called Seas**. And God saw that it was good.*

Both the Hebrew and Greek words translated "earth" really mean "dry land." They NEVER include the whole globe, the seas, or the atmosphere. God called the

atmosphere, "heaven." Whenever the terms "heaven and earth" appear together, "heaven" refers to the atmosphere where the birds fly, and "earth" refers to dry land where people live. In the context of most passages, the word "earth" usually means a particular piece of land, like the "Promised Land" or the "land of Canaan." Every time you see the word "earth" in your Bible you should substitute "land" for a better understanding. The context will tell you the limits of the term "land." "Heaven and earth" should always be understood as, "sky and land."

Furthermore, the word "new" Peter used in the clause, "new sky and new land," does NOT mean a different land. It is frequently used of something that has been refurbished. For example, Paul used the same word when he wrote, "*if any man be in Christ he is a new creation.*" Paul did not mean that the sinner was blown to smithereens and a completely different person took his place. Rather, "new" means changed, refreshed, made better.

I would really like to know how Fields can point to 2 Peter 3 as proof of the total destruction of this creation, and not notice that the "new heavens and new earth" overthrows his claim that a non physical reality awaits the believer in heaven! Which is it, Mr. Fields, "new heavens and new earth," or a non material existence outside of the material creation? You can't have it both ways! Heaven and earth (sky and land) are both things of this creation (Gen. 1:8-10), and are physical by definition!

### **The Day of the Lord According to the "Holy Prophets"**

Peter writes, "*for the Day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night,*" (v. 10). This begs the question, what is the "Day of the Lord?" The answer is given in the "*words which were spoken before by the holy prophets,*" (v. 2). Isaiah describes it in several places.

*Isaiah 13:9-13*

*9 Behold, the day of the LORD comes, Cruel, with both wrath and fierce anger, To lay the land desolate [the promised Land]; And He will destroy its sinners from it. [please! see Psalm 37:9-11]*

*10 For the stars of heaven and their constellations will not give their light; The sun will be darkened in its going forth, And the moon will not cause its light to shine.*

*11 "I will punish the world for its evil, And the wicked for their iniquity; I will halt the arrogance of the proud, And will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible.*

*12 I will make a mortal more rare than fine gold, A man more than the golden wedge of Ophir.*

*13 Therefore I will shake the heavens, And the earth will move out of her place, In the wrath of the LORD of hosts And in the day of His fierce anger.*

Is this the total destruction of this creation? Isaiah continues.

*Isaiah 14:1-2*

*1 For the LORD will have mercy on Jacob, and will still choose Israel, **and settle them in their own land.** The strangers will be joined with them, and they will cling to the house of Jacob. 2 Then people will take them and bring them to their place, and the house of Israel will possess them for servants and maids in the land of the LORD; **they will take them captive whose captives they were, and rule over their oppressors.***

Virtually every time we have a description of the “Day of the Lord” in the Old Testament prophets, it is followed by a description of the restoration of the land of Israel and Jerusalem, (cf. Isaiah 34-35, Zech. 14). Consider Joel’s prophecy of the Day of the Lord as a typical example.

*Joel 3:12-21*

*12 “Let the nations be wakened, and come up to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; For there I will sit to judge all the surrounding nations. 13 **Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe.** [cf. Rev. 14:14-16] Come, go down; For **the winepress is full, The vats overflow — For their wickedness is great.**” [cf. Rev. 14:7-20, Rev. 19:15]*

*14 Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For **the day of the LORD** is near in the valley of decision. 15 The sun and moon will grow dark, And the stars will diminish their brightness. 16 The LORD also will roar from Zion, And utter His voice from Jerusalem; The heavens and earth will shake; But the LORD will be a shelter for His people, And the strength of the children of Israel.*

*17 “So you shall know that **I am the LORD your God, Dwelling in Zion My holy mountain. Then Jerusalem shall be holy,** And no aliens shall ever pass through her again.” 18 And it will come to **pass in that day That the mountains shall drip with new wine, The hills shall flow with milk, And all the brooks of Judah shall be flooded with water; A fountain shall flow from the house of the LORD And water the Valley of Acacias.** 19 “Egypt shall be a desolation, And Edom a desolate wilderness, Because of violence against the people of Judah, For they have shed innocent blood in their land. 20 **But Judah shall abide forever, And Jerusalem from generation to generation.** 21 For I will acquit them of the guilt of bloodshed, whom I had not acquitted; **For the LORD dwells in Zion.**”*

This theme is consistent throughout the prophets – the fiery destruction of the land in judgment, followed by the restoration of the land with its present places and landmarks, the restoration of God’s people permanently to the Promised land, and God’s dwelling among them forever.

That Peter was merely alluding to prophecies of this kind is proven by his direct quote of Isaiah 65-66. “Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells,” (v. 13). “His promise” that Peter referenced is Isaiah’s prophecy of the “new heavens and new earth.”

The entire “promise” in Isaiah consists of both chapters, 65-66. However, the clause itself, “new heavens and new earth” (refreshed sky and refreshed land) is found in Isaiah 65:17 & 66:22. And the context clearly defines what it means. After God provides a “refreshed sky and refreshed land,” this occurs.

*Isa 65:25 NKJV*

*25 “The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, The lion shall eat straw like the ox, And dust shall be the serpent’s food. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain,” Says the LORD.*

The same physical animals remain in the “new heavens and new earth” (refreshed sky and refreshed land). It is apparent that the animal kingdom is also refreshed, since animals are no longer carnivorous. In chapter 66, the prophet Isaiah went on to further describe the restoration of Jerusalem. He spoke of missionaries going out to the world proclaiming worship of God in Jerusalem. God concluded “His promise” as follows:

*Isaiah 66:15-16, 22-24*

*15 For behold, the LORD will come with fire, and with His chariots, like a whirlwind, to render His anger with fury, and His rebuke with flames of fire. 16 For by fire and by His sword The LORD will judge all flesh; And the slain of the LORD shall be many. ...*

*22 “For as the new heavens and new earth which I will make shall remain before Me,” says the LORD, “So shall your descendants and your name remain.*

*23 And it shall come to pass that from one New Moon to another, And from one Sabbath to another, All flesh shall come to worship before Me,” says the LORD.*

*24 “And they shall go forth and look upon the corpses of the men who have transgressed against Me. For their worm does not die, and their fire is not quenched. They shall be an abhorrence to all flesh.”*

How does Fields explain the presence of the corpses of the wicked in his mythological “new heavens and new earth?” This is Gehenna, spoken of by Jesus as still future when He quoted this passage, (Mark 9:43-48). The smoldering corpses of the wicked will be visible throughout the millennium to those who come to worship the Lord at the Temple in Jerusalem. It will be a reminder to “all flesh” what happens to those who oppose God.

Joel 2:1-11 describes the Day of the Lord in graphic detail. The burning of “earth” (land) that day is the purging of **the land of Israel** by God’s angelic army.

Joel 2:1-11

1 Blow the trumpet ***in Zion***, And sound an alarm ***in My holy mountain!*** Let all the inhabitants ***of the land*** tremble; For ***the day of the LORD*** is coming, For it is at hand:

2 A day of darkness and gloominess, A day of clouds and thick darkness. Like the morning clouds spread over the mountains, a people come, great and strong, The like of whom has never been; Nor will there ever be any such after them, Even for many successive generations.

3 ***A fire devours before them, And behind them a flame burns; The land is like the Garden of Eden before them, And behind them a desolate wilderness; Surely nothing shall escape them.*** 4 Their appearance is like the appearance of horses; And like swift steeds, so they run. 5 With a noise like chariots Over mountaintops they leap, Like the noise of a flaming fire that devours the stubble, Like a strong people set in battle array.

6 Before them the people writhe in pain; All faces are drained of color. 7 They run like mighty men, They climb the wall like men of war; Every one marches in formation, And they do not break ranks. 8 They do not push one another; Every one marches in his own column. Though they lunge between the weapons, They are not cut down. 9 They run to and fro in the city, They run on the wall; They climb into the houses, They enter at the windows like a thief.

10 The earth quakes before them, The heavens tremble; The sun and moon grow dark, And the stars diminish their brightness. 11 ***The LORD gives voice before His army, For His camp is very great; For strong is the One who executes His word. For the day of the LORD is great and very terrible; Who can endure it?***

Yet, as we continue reading, we find the restoration of the land follows, and God dwells there forever, (Joel 3:18-21). Likewise Malachi describes the purging of the land of Israel by fire in similar terms. Yet, the righteous remain in it AFTER the burning.

Malachi 4:1-3 NKJV

1 "For behold, ***the day is coming, Burning like an oven, and all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up,***" Says the LORD of hosts, "***That will leave them neither root nor branch.***

2 But to you who fear My name The Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings; And ***you shall go out*** and grow fat like stall-fed calves.

3 ***You shall trample the wicked, For they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet*** on the day that I do this," Says the LORD of hosts.

Fields' problem in 2 Peter 3 is that he wants to divorce that passage from "the words spoken before by the holy prophets" (v. 2) in general, and from "His promise" (v. 13), quoted from Isaiah 65-66, in particular.

### **The Elements**

Fields appeals to the word "elements" in 2 Peter 3:10-12, attempting to show that even the building blocks of matter will be destroyed. But, is that what it means? Was Peter trying to give his readers a lesson in chemistry? Strong's defines the primary meaning of στοιχια as "something orderly in arrangement." Fields quotes Vine's, "used in the plural, primarily signifies any first things from which others in a series, or a composite whole take their rise." This does not support Fields' claim. The following passages define the biblical meaning of the word, στοιχια (elements).

*Gal 4:3-4 NKJV*

*3 Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world.*

*Gal 4:8-10 NKJV*

*9 But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage?*

*Col 2:8 NKJV*

*8 Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.*

*Col 2:20 NKJV*

*20 Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations*

Not once in the Bible does στοιχια have anything to do with chemistry. The "fervent heat" will consume the foundational elements of human society, the infrastructure of civilization that mankind relies on for his survival. Peter said, "both the land and the works that are in it." Man's "works" are synonymous with "the elements."

### **"Burned Up" or "Discovered?"**

The NKJV, based on the Textus Receptus, renders the last word in verse 10 as "burned up," from κατακαησεται. However, the oldest manuscripts, p72, ~~Σ~~, & B, have ευρεθησεται instead,<sup>12</sup> which means to "discover." This word was used of Mary, when



she was **discovered** to be with child by Joseph. The same word was used by Jesus in the clause, “seek and you shall **find**.” The NIV translates εὑρεθησεται in 2 Pet. 3:10 as “laid bare.” The implication is that what man has done will be tested (and discovered) by the fire, to see whether or not it will survive. We find precisely the same idea in two other New Testament passages.

*Hebrews 12:27-29 NKJV*

27 “Now this, “Yet once more,” indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain. 28 Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. 29 For our God is a consuming fire.”

Note that the Kingdom we are to receive will include the things that survive the great shaking and burning. “Things” is neuter, referring to things on earth, the things of human government, society, infrastructure, and even what Christians have done.

*1 Cor 3:13-15*

13 each one’s work will become clear; for the Day [of the Lord] will declare it, because it will be revealed [discovered] by fire; and the fire will test each one’s work, of what sort it is. 14 If anyone’s work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. 15 If anyone’s work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

### **Consistency and Harmony is Proof of Correctness**

The consistent teaching of the Prophets and the New Testament is that the Day of the Lord will test man’s works by fire. What is good will remain, and what is not will be consumed in the fire. What could be clearer when we harmonize all these passages, both Old Testament and New? There is **perfect harmony** in Scripture, when your presuppositions are correct. Fields isolates 2 Peter 3 from the rest of the Bible. His interpretation makes Peter contradict the very prophets he claimed to be referencing! “Any doctrinal position that requires Scriptural contradictions cannot be the true doctrine of Christ.”

### **Conclusion:**

In the first round, Fields acknowledged that the Apostles themselves were expecting the restoration of the Davidic Dynasty and the land of Israel when Jesus ascended to heaven.<sup>3</sup> He claimed all this was swept away by the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, and replaced with his amillennial “hope.” In this second round, Fields has attempted to prove this claim, by showing that the eternal destiny of the believer is heaven in the

New Testament. Yet, in every single case, he overstates what his Scriptures actually say, or else he imposes a meaning on the terms that is completely foreign to Biblical precedent. This is precisely what Peter had in mind in the chapter we have just discussed, warning about such mutilation of end-time prophetic Scriptures, *“in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures,”* (2 Pet. 3:16).

The careful reader will search in vain all of the Scriptures Fields cited for a single promise of heaven as the eternal abode of the righteous, or that resurrected Christians will ever go there. However, the Word of God states plainly that the land remains forever, (Psalm 78:69; Psalm 104:5; Eccl 1:4), and the righteous will dwell in it forever.

*David – “For evildoers shall be cut off; But those who wait on the LORD, They shall inherit the earth. For yet a little while and the wicked shall be no more; Indeed, you will look carefully for his place, But it shall be no more. But the meek shall inherit the earth, And shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.”* (Psalm 37:9-11 NKJV)

*Jesus – “Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the earth.”* (Matt. 5:5NKJV)

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**Notes:**

1. Intellectually-Honest and Intellectually-Dishonest Debate Tactics, <http://www.johntreed.com/debate.html>. According to this article, the tactics employed by Fields (especially in his closing argument to round one) are “typically employed by dishonest politicians, lawyers of guilty parties, dishonest salespeople, cads, cults, and others who are attempting to perpetrate a fraud.” I encourage the reader to analyze Fields’ debate responses, and compare his tactics to the extensive list of dishonest debate tactics listed in this article.
2. αἰώνιον is the same word for “eternal” used in John 3:16, in the clause “eternal life.”
3. A Response to Warner’s “the Abrahamic Covenant,” Topic I, Rebuttal (b), page 9, paragraph 2.
4. Lest the reader think that I am avoiding Field’s latest comments about the Early Church Fathers, I am planning an entire round on that issue, assuming that the debate continues for a few more rounds.
5. Irenaeus, Against Heresies, Bk I, vi, 1
6. Irenaeus, Against Heresies, Bk. V, vi,
7. Josephus, Wars of the Jews, Bk. V, v
8. Irenaeus, Against Heresies, Bk. V, ix, 1
9. Irenaeus, Against Heresies, Bk. V, vii, 2
10. Robertson, A. T., Word Pictures, Phil. 3:20
11. Kittle, TDNT, Vol. VI, p. 535
12. Hodges & Farstad, The Greek New Testament According to the Majority Text, p. 703, footnote 10r.