

by many in creation ministries up to this time. But biblical eschatology and biblical creation historical narrative are not the same thing. My friend Russ Humphreys takes exception with my approach also, saying that I am inconsistent, by taking a literal reading of narrative texts in Genesis but not in Revelation and other prophetic texts. I disagree, as I do also with Cosner here, and with many so-called authorities on eschatology. I don't believe biblical history and eschatology have the same standing. One is known and the other is not.

In regards to the Hebrew words (natah, raqa, and mathach) Cosner seems to be referring to, as mentioned in the text, I have discussed their use before (my ref. 12) in *J. Creation* without much comment. I suggest they do not support an expanding universe, as in the rubber sheet analogy of standard big bang cosmology, and as such cannot be used to support such a notion. This has at least one impact on creation cosmology, which Russ Humphreys has acknowledged. It caused him to modify his approach in his own cosmology to looking at a static universe rather than an expanding one.¹

In my ref. 13, I comment on others' interpretations, or what I would call misinterpretations, of some of those verses used to make claims of science well beyond the possible meanings of the Hebrew texts, but I do not make any "vague accusation of eisegesis". I simply state that "I believe that eisegesis is used". There's nothing vague about that and I am not being accusative but stating a problem that I also have been guilty of, i.e. reading into scriptures something I want them to say.

On Cosner's point about the burning bush, I disagree. The burning bush tells us about the created world. It tells us something about the physics of the universe. Williams and I wrote about this in our book *Dismantling*

the Big Bang.² There we wrote that it was the sustaining power of God that maintained the bush burning—essentially reversing entropy—and when the Creator removed that sustaining power the bush then burnt away. In like manner the processes of increase in entropy in the universe result in decay. God's sustaining power is capable of maintaining the physical systems and He has chosen on occasion to demonstrate this to us. The link to eschatology may be seen in the link to the future state of the universe, which is what I put forward in this article.

I agree that *ōlām* has a range of meanings, and one of those meanings is 'forever'. The question then is, do the stars and galaxies remain eternally or not? It seems Cosner is arguing that in these passages because they are poetry they cannot be relied upon to mean what they apparently say. I disagree. The verses cited are not allegorical and have a straightforward meaning. But the passage in Luke 16 I may have misstated as an equivalent verse to that in Matthew 24. I was not meaning to imply it was the same context but rather equivalent in meaning. There Jesus makes the same statement and hence I used Luke 16:17 to interpret Matthew 24:35.

In regards to this article, a reader wrote to me stating the following:

"Just a note to say I agree with your conclusion that the universe as promised by God is eternal. Unfortunately, many Christians read scripture and are unaware of the obvious 'Hebraisms'. So scriptures are misunderstood ... and can seem contradictory. The verse Matthew 24:35 is written in a very common style ... used in the Talmud as well. Like saying that 'salt which has lost its taste' ... salt doesn't lose its taste. You were very wise to look to other verses where God states that the universe is eternal. So, in conclusion, we have

assurance of God's Word being eternal because we know that the universe is eternal."

The discussion in my article is really about the way one interprets the various scriptures I have cited. The standard position of many in biblical creationist circles has been that the New Heavens and New Earth are totally recreated—the old ones being totally wiped out. But even Cosner's statement of "the idea of the destruction and restoration of the universe, and its parallel with death and resurrection of believers, is so pervasive throughout Scripture" is not an argument in favour of total destruction and recreation but of renewal. The believers are not totally recreated again but renewed (or changed, 1 Corinthians 15:51–54) in the New Heaven and the New Earth. Christ was observed in a new resurrection body that bore the marks of His crucifixion. A vestige of the past body was still there. Eschatologically, I argue (my ref. 15) that it is the earth and the atmospheric heavens that are renewed, i.e. refurbished, and not the annihilation and destruction of the whole physical universe, which God created.

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References

1. Hartnett, J.G., Tension, not extension in creation cosmology, creation.com/tension-not-extension-in-creation-cosmology, 12 August 2014.
2. Williams, A. and Hartnett, J.G., *Dismantling the Big Bang*, Master Books, Green Forrest, AR, 2015.