

GOD
HEAVEN
and
HAR MAGEDON

GOD, HEAVEN AND HAR MAGEDON
A COVENANTAL TALE OF COSMOS AND TELOS

MEREDITH G. KLINE

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GOD, HEAVEN AND HAR MAGEDON

A Covenantal Tale of Cosmos and Telos

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to our three sons

—

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Key to Abbreviations

BOOKS

- BOC* *By Oath Consigned: A Re-interpretation of the Covenant Signs of Circumcision and Baptism.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968.
- GOM* *Glory in Our Midst: A Biblical-Theological Reading of Zechariah's Night Visions.* Overland Park: Two Age Press, 2001.
- IOS* *Images of the Spirit.* Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980.
- KP* *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview.* Overland Park: Two Age Press, 2000.
- SBA* *The Structure of Biblical Authority.* 2nd ed., rev. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975.
- TGK* *Treaty of the Great King: The Covenant Structure of Deuteronomy, Studies and Commentary.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963.

FESTSCHRIFT CONTRIBUTIONS

- CSW* "The Covenant of the Seventieth Week" in *The Law and the Prophets: Old Testament Studies in Honor of Oswald T. Allis*, ed. by J. H. Skilton. Nutley: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1974, pp. 452-469.
- DLM* "Death, Leviathan, and the Martyrs: Isaiah 24:1-27:1" in *A Tribute to Gleason Archer*, ed. by Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. and Ronald R. Youngblood. Chicago: Moody Press, 1986, pp. 229-249.
- OOS* "The Oracular Origin of the State" in *Biblical and Near Eastern Studies: Essays in Honor of William Sanford LaSor*, ed. by G. A. Tuttle. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978, pp. 132-141.
- TBO* "Trial by Ordeal" in *Through Christ's Word: A Festschrift for Dr. Philip E. Hughes*, ed. by W. Robert Godfrey, Jesse L. Boyd III. Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1985, pp. 81-93.

ARTICLES

- BNR* "Because It Had Not Rained" *Westminster Theological Journal* 20 (1957/58): 146-157.
- CONE* "Comments on an Old-New Error" *Westminster Theological Journal* 41 (1978/79): 172-189.
- DK* "Divine Kingship and Gen 6:1-4" *Westminster Theological Journal* 24 (1961/62): 187-204.
- DT* "Double Trouble" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 32 (1989): 171-179.
- FCO* "The Feast of Cover-over" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 37 (1994): 497-510.
- FR* "The First Resurrection" *Westminster Theological Journal* 37 (1974/75): 366-375.
- FRR* "The First Resurrection: a Reaffirmation" *Westminster Theological Journal* 39 (1976/77): 110-119.
- GUL* "Gospel Until the Law: Rom 5:13-14 and the Old Covenant" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 34 (1991): 433-446.
- HMEM* "Har Magedon: The End of the Millennium" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 39 (1996): 207-222.
- STGC* "Space and Time in the Genesis Cosmogony" *Perspectives on Science and the Christian Faith* 48:1 (1996): 2-15.

Preface

It could be this octogenarian's last book and there were several things I wanted to do. One was to provide a primer in covenant theology. Another was to make more accessible the gist of some of my previous biblico-theological studies and to do so in a form serviceable to a wider readership than most of my publications, which have been oriented to the professional community of biblical research and to my students in the academic setting of theological schools.

The major move in this democratic direction was to enliven the analysis of the covenants by introducing the series of covenant administrations within the intriguing story line of Har Magedon, the mountain of God. Extending as it does from creation to consummation, the tale of Har Magedon readily accommodates the total history of the covenants and invites excursions into areas that have been of special interest to me, like pneumatology, cosmology, eschatology, and common grace and culture (cf. the "cosmos and telos" specifications of "a covenantal tale" in the subtitle). Moreover, quite apart from such considerations the current spate of secularized and dispensational versions of "Armageddon" (fantastic fiction all) makes a review of the biblical Har Magedon motif timely.

Though the covenants remain the theological foundation and heart of the matter, by its adoption as our narrative framework Har Magedon becomes the dominant surface theme. As we track this theme through the Scriptures we discover a recurring pattern, an eschatological megastructure that appears in each of the typological world ages culminating respectively

Preface

at mounts Ararat and Sinai/Zion and then once again, climactically, in the antitypical New Covenant age. This Har Magedon paradigm, which shapes our telling of the covenantal tale (cf. Part Three), consists in the following complex of elements: establishment of a kingdom covenant by the Lord of Har Magedon; a meritorious accomplishment by the covenant grantee, triumphant in the Har Magedon conflict; a common grace interim before the coming of the covenanted kingdom; an antichrist crisis; consummation of the Glory-kingdom through a last judgment victory of the covenant Lord in a final battle of Har Magedon.

If only in condensed, digest fashion the present work is thus a comprehensive biblico-theological survey of the kingdom of God from Eden to the New Jerusalem. As such it complements my *Kingdom Prologue* (which focuses on kingdom developments through the history recorded in the Book of Genesis) and might then have been appropriately entitled *Kingdom Come* or *Kingdom Consummation*. With so vast a terrain to be surveyed, the treatment has had to be highly selective in the inclusion and coverage of topics and in the adducing of the relevant Scriptural data and other evidence in support of conclusions advocated on controversial subjects. It is hoped, however, that these explorations will at least serve to bring more clearly into view the grand biblical vision of God's heavenly kingdom in its eschatological movement from Alpha to Omega.

As a step towards a less academic form of presentation footnotes are limited to an occasional reference to a pertinent, more ample discussion elsewhere in my writings. To facilitate this referencing process several earlier articles are reproduced in full here in the section of appendices.

For his amanuensis assistance in the production of the computer document and indeed for his coordinating of the whole editorial-publishing process of bringing this book to see the light of day I am indebted beyond words to Jonathan B. Kline.

In biblical quotations non-AV translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

The cover picture is a reproduction of an oil painting (53½ x 33) by Muriel G. Kline.

Meredith G. Kline
January 2005

Part One

God and Heaven

Chapter One Naming the Metaworld

Chapter Two Alpha Radiation: The Creation of Heaven

Chapter Three Omega Apocalypse: The Consummation
of Heaven

Chapter One

Naming the Metaworld

Heaven and Cosmos

The Bible tells us of the existence of a realm our mortal eyes cannot see. In the biblical vocabulary (as in our own) this invisible celestial realm is called by the same name as the visible region of the star-studded sky (viz. “heaven”). We shall be reflecting later on the significance of this name sharing.

Living in an age when intensive astronomical probing has been rewarded with astonishing discoveries concerning the cosmos, we are bound to wonder how the biblical heaven is to be correlated with all this. How are we to fit into our scientific cosmology this mysterious realm beyond human perception? Until we can comprehend the heavenly reality presently inaccessible to scientific investigation and incorporate it into our analysis, the quest for a unified field explication of the totality of creation must prove elusive. But meanwhile in biblical revelation we may catch a glimpse of something of the nature of heaven and how heaven relates to our visible world, something that brightens our religious contemplations, whatever its limitations for our scientific constructions.

In theological reflections heaven is sometimes considered to be a place outside the cosmos, out beyond our universe. Or if it is regarded

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as within our space-time-matter-energy continuum, it is thought of as a separate part of the cosmos, at some distance from the environs of planet earth. There are biblical indications, however, that suggest otherwise. For instance, in Isaiah 6 the heaven-temple (vv. 1,4) is identified with the whole earth (v. 3). And there are those episodes reported in Scripture when the eyes of earthlings have been supernaturally opened to perceive heavenly phenomena and they discover that the very spot where they are is the gate of heaven (Gen 28:16,17) or that it is filled with heavenly beings (2 Kgs 6:17). Heaven, it would seem, is not remote from us but present right here, even though unseen. Also, there does not appear to be anything in Scripture that would contradict the assumption that the invisible heaven is coextensive with the visible cosmos in its entirety.

As an analogy to this inter-permeation of the invisible and the visible worlds we may point to the proposal of current cosmologists that so-called dark matter is present throughout the universe, in quantities apparently far surpassing visible matter, yet unseen. And analogous to a heaven that is perceptible to angels and others but is impervious to ordinary human vision is the familiar fact that sectors of the electro-magnetic spectrum, though detectable by the sensory organs of some earthly creatures, are beyond the perception of others. But such analogous phenomena do not really explain what it is about heaven that distinguishes it from the visible cosmos and renders it invisible to us. That mysterious aspect of heaven is beyond our knowledge. In order to discuss it, all we can do is adopt some conventional term for it, preferably one that keeps in sight the intermeshing of the visible and invisible realms. We shall use the term "dimension." To signify that this heavenly reality is something beyond our present experiencing we shall prefix meta-, thus metadimension. To give this distinguishing meta quality of heaven a more specific name we may call it a Glory-dimension or, resorting to the Greek, a Doxa-dimension.

The appropriateness of this name will become clear as we proceed to take a look at what the Bible discloses concerning the substance and structure of heaven. Approaching the subject from the spatial or cosmological point of view, our particular interest will be in the topography and architecture of heaven. But since God's Glory-Presence is the preeminent reality of heaven, the cosmological and theological perspectives are inseparable here. Heaven is a holy location and it contains, indeed it consists in, sacred architecture. It is a Glory-temple-city.

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Here in Part One we shall also examine the beginning of heaven and its consummation. This will contribute to our probing of the interconnection of heaven and the visible cosmos. It will also emerge that our distinction between the visible and invisible realms is not something absolute and permanent, but relative to human experience and limited to the first stage, the pre-consummation stage, of man's historical existence. As a result of man's glorification-metamorphosis heaven will no longer be beyond his perception. For man too, as already for God and his angels, heaven will then be cosmos and cosmos will be heaven.

Heaven: Glory-Temple

To help us envisage the better country he has prepared for those who love him (1 Cor 2:9; Heb 11:10), God has provided some visual aids. For one thing, before the coming of Christ, the people of God were given earthly buildings, a tabernacle and a temple, as miniaturized models of his holy heaven, and an earthly land flowing with milk and honey as a suggestive image of the paradise character of their heavenly inheritance. When we focus on the subject of heaven on earth in Part Two we shall be dealing further with this theme of the replication of the heavenly archetypes in earthly symbolic copies, visible shadows here below of the invisible world above, and foreshadowings of the world to come.

Secondly, from time to time the Lord favored his prophets with visionary experiences of heaven. Accounts of these visions have been included in the Scriptures so that we might all be able to see heaven as it was described through the prophets' supernaturally opened eyes. Of course, even when unveiled in such revelations of the Spirit, heaven remains cloaked in symbolism. Typology is the idiom of apocalyptic vision. What is seen in these visions still bears the shape of the earthly models. Heaven appears to the prophets as a glorified version of the temple on Mount Zion. Because of our inability to apprehend the heavenly reality itself, it was necessary that these prophetic disclosures be cast in such symbolic forms. Yet this imagery does convey to us a true conception of heaven, enough for now to serve as an anchor of the soul, even if, with our natural curiosity about the spatial-topographical nature of our everlasting habitat,

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we long for something more, eagerly awaiting the unveiling of heaven at its ultimate apocalypse.

Totally dominating the scene in biblical revelations of heaven is the presence of God, the God of Glory. No creature can see God, who is Spirit, in his transcendence above and apart from all creation, visible and invisible, but the eternal unseen One does manifest his personal presence within his creation. As beheld by the prophetic seers in their visions of heaven and described in their literary accounts of those experiences, the Glory theophany, like the topographical and architectural features in such visions, is a likeness of something belonging to the earthly scene. It is portrayed as a Shekinah-like luminous cloud of smoke and fire that fills a royal sanctuary, a resplendent theophanic cloud that occupies the throne in the holy of holies between cherubim guardians. Needless to say, the relationship is actually the other way around. The Shekinah cloud is the likeness or copy, a projection of the archetypal Glory into this world in a form accommodated to mortals. The Glory-Presence is the original, and it is this Glory epiphany that is the paramount, definitive, quintessential feature of heaven.

As we examine the nature of this divine Presence in heaven we are led back to our special point of interest, the architectural identity of heaven. It turns out, in fact, that there is a soft edge (as the watercolorists say) between the divine Resident and the heavenly residence. As we look, the edge indeed becomes lost; the line of distinction disappears.

The glory of the heavenly Presence is a royal glory, the glory of a king with myriads of servants in attendance about his throne. So it was in Isaiah's vision of heaven. The prophet saw "the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up" in the midst of the seraphim (Isa 6:1,2) and he exclaimed, "my eyes have seen the King, Yahweh of hosts" (v. 5). When heaven was opened to Ezekiel and he saw "visions of God" (Ezek 1:1), a wondrous cherubim-chariot appeared to him, a chariot-throne with a bright radiance suffusing it (vv. 4ff.) and investing the enthroned Deity (vv. 26f.). Such "was the appearance of the likeness of the Glory of Yahweh" (v. 28). And when a door was opened in heaven for the apostle John (Rev 4:1) and he was "in the Spirit" (v. 2a), "behold, there was a throne set in heaven and one sitting on the throne" arched with emerald glory (v. 2b), one acclaimed by the heavenly retinue as the Creator-Lord, worthy to receive the glory, honor, and power (v. 11). There are also the familiar great white throne

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judgment scenes in the visions of heaven in Dan 7:9,10 and Rev 20:11, with the radiant divine Judge again seen as seated on a fiery chariot throne. Consistently, the center of the unveiled heaven is occupied by the Majesty on high, the enthroned King of creation. Hence, architecturally, heaven is a palace, a royal court.

Because heaven's King is the Lord God, the thrice-holy One (Isa 6:3; Rev 4:8) whose Presence sanctifies a place, the royal house of heaven is at the same time a holy house, a temple. Qōdeš, "holiness," is an Old Testament designation of heaven (cf., e.g., Deut 26:15; Jer 25:30) and its earthly replica is called miqdāš, "sanctuary" (1 Chr 22:19; Ps 74:7; Isa 63:18).

The equivalence of the palace and temple images of heaven is exhibited in passages where heaven is both depicted as a royal court and denoted as a hêkāl, "temple," a term which means "great house" according to its ultimate derivation and is itself also used for the house of a king, a palace (cf. Ps 45:16; Dan 1:4). Isaiah refers to the heavenly place where he saw the King on his throne as the "temple" (Isa 6:1). In Psalm 11, David's affirmation that "Yahweh's throne is in heaven" (v. 4b) is paralleled by the statement that "Yahweh's holy seat [cf. Ps 47:9] is in the temple" (v. 4a). Here "temple" is a synonym for heaven and this heaven-temple is said to be God's throne site, the royal court of the righteous Judge of all the earth (vv. 4c-7). Other Old Testament instances of the identification of the heaven from which God emerges for judgment as hêkāl, "temple," are Ps 18:6,9,13 [7,10,14] and Mic 1:2,3. Likewise, the New Testament Apocalypse repeatedly designates the heavenly site of God's judgment throne as a "temple" or the holy "tabernacle" of the covenant (cf. Rev 11:19; 14:15,17; 15:5-8; 21:11,23).

The spatial-architectural nature of heaven is thus defined by its central, all-dominant feature, the God-King resident there. By virtue of his holy Glory-Presence, heaven is a royal, sacred space, a palace-temple. But the relation of the divine Glory to heaven viewed as an architectural structure goes beyond imparting to it the formal, functional significance of palace-temple. There is in addition a remarkable identity between the Glory-Presence and the heaven-temple, a kind of substantial oneness. God, that is, the epiphanic heavenly manifestation of God, *is* the temple.

This identification of God with the heaven-temple is stated quite simply in Rev 21:22. Referring to New Jerusalem, the cosmic city of the

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consummation, heaven unveiled, John declares, “I saw no temple therein, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple thereof.” The apostle is not making a pantheistic identification of God with the cosmos-temple. Rather, the Glory manifestation of God is here called God. What John declares is that the radiant theophany formation constitutes the temple structure; the heaven-temple consists of, is made up of, the Glory.

A similar coalescence of God’s Glory and temple is found in Isa 4:5,6 in a vision of the heavenly Zion, representing the consummated messianic kingdom. The Glory epiphany, as usual the dominant feature of the heavenly scene, is depicted as a canopy covering the temple mount, a pavilion sheltering Zion’s holy assemblies. [Cf. *IOS* 36.] The underlying concept here is that of God’s house serving as a tabernacle-shelter for his people (cf. Rev 7:15 and 21:3). And the Shekinah-Glory is identified as the primary sheltering component of the holy house, the protective roof overhead. Echoed here is the imagery of the paschal-event at the exodus, where the Glory-cloud hovered over (cf. Isa 31:4,5) the blood-smeared dwellings of the Israelites, shielding them from the destroyer-angel when he passed over the land of Egypt. [Cf. *FCO*.]

A variation on the conception of the Glory as constituting the temple structure appears in Isaiah 6. This vision of heaven contains two symbolic images of the theophanic Glory, each of which is declared to fill the heaven-temple. The first Glory image is that of the royal robes of the enthroned King (v. 1; cf. Luke 12:27). So extended, so global, is their sweep that they fill the cosmic sanctuary. The second thing that is said to fill the temple is smoke (v. 4). Elsewhere, smoke is found as a feature of theophany, as in God’s appearances to ratify covenant with Abraham (Gen 15:7) and with Israel (Exod 19:18). In the nearby Isaiah 4 prophecy, the Glory-theophany is described as “cloud and smoke by day” (v. 5), that is, as antitypical to the Shekinah pillar of the exodus. And the apostle John, speaking of the heavenly temple as filled with smoke, identifies the smoke as “from the glory of God and from his power” (Rev 15:8; cf. Exod 40:34,35; 1 Kgs 8:10,11; 2 Chr 5:13,14; 7:1,2). It is then the smoke of the epiphanic Glory that fills the holy house of the God-King in Isa 6:4.

This Isaiah 6 imagery of the diffusion of the epiphanic smoke throughout the temple identifies the divine Glory not with the outer structure that encased and shaped the temple space, as did the canopy-roof

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symbolism in Isa 4:5,6, but with the inner volume or space of the temple, with its atmosphere. Yet the distinction is not so sharp in the case of this wondrous heavenly architecture. The divine radiance that is ethereal and serves as atmosphere is at the same time a plastic, shaping, sculpturing substance that eliminates the need of separate bounding walls and roof. Out of this Glory-dimensioned epiphanic stuff, now invisible to earthlings, is heaven constructed.

As we shall see below, the Glory epiphany complex, though a fully trinitarian manifestation (see, e.g., Rev 4:2,5; 5:6; cf. 1:4,5), is peculiarly identified with the Spirit. Accordingly, heaven is the Spirit realm and to enter heaven is to be in the Spirit (Rev 4:1,2). This throws an interesting light on the atmosphere of the heaven-temple constituted by the Glory-Spirit. For the Spirit is the breath of life (Gen 2:7; John 20:22) and hence the picture that emerges is that of heaven dwellers, those in the Spirit-atmosphere, breathing continually afresh the breath of life. That is the secret of immortality.

Conclusion. What we can glean from the biblical revelation concerning the metaphysics of heaven thus lends support to the suggestion that Glory-dimension serve as our designation for that meta(beyond)dimension which characterizes the invisible realm, distinguishing it from the visible creation. We might add that in view of the identification of the Glory with the Spirit, Spirit-dimension would also be an apt name.