

Gospel Gleanings, "...especially the parchments"

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Scoffers

This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour: Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. (2 Peter 3:1-4, KJV 1900)

In 2 Peter 2:1 and context, a context that encompasses the whole chapter, Peter reminds his New Testament readers that the New Testament church shall face false teachers just as Old Testament Israel faced a sadly steady parade of false prophets. The spiritual results are the same. How does Peter describe these false teachers? How may we recognize them so as to avoid lending them our support and aid? He examines their actions more than their words which often sound quite proper, though he puts the whole false prophet demeanor under the spotlight.

1. Rather than doing things that result in edification (1 Corinthians 14:3), they bring swift destruction onto the culture of the church. The fruit of their influence is contention and strife, not harmony and edification. They rationalize and often demonstrate skill at their favorite habit of dividing saint from saint, not making personal harmony and unity in the faith the fruit of their lives. They have no real sense of what edification means, much less do they dedicate their labors to it. (Romans 15:2; 1 Corinthians 14:3; 2 Corinthians 13:10)
2. Their pernicious ways infect other believers and "...*overthrow the faith of some.*" (2 Timothy 2:18) They often seek more a personal following than the benefit of others. Their typical objective is to prove themselves right, and they will run roughshod over others if they consider it necessary to win their way. The more people they can gain to their personal private interpretations the more they celebrate. Successful deception is often their personal badge of accomplishment. In this corrupt behavior, they imitate contemporary politicians, one of the lowest and most unworthy examples imaginable. For both classes, false teachers and this kind of politician, being wrong is not about a principle of right and wrong that transcends anyone's personal ideas. Being wrong to them means getting caught and exposed. Whatever they do and get away with is right in their eyes.

3. Their conduct brings slander to the way of truth. A seeking soul will observe a humble, godly believer and long to be more like him or her. The same person will see the false teacher and have no real interest in imitating him or her. This person has seen a whole world of self-seeking, self-serving people just like this false teacher. They are looking for something better, not more of the same thing they've grown tired of in the world.
4. In the end, they seek gain for self. They effectively turn the Lord's precious sheep into a piece of merchandise that they manipulate for their personal gain or benefit. In our study passage, Peter specifically states that these false teachers shall walk in their own lust, seeking personal gain and not the edification of other believers. Beware. Often they will feign words to make it appear that they are selfless and caring, but examine their walk, the fruit of their personal conduct. If they talk peace, but war and conflict follow them wherever they go, do not listen to their words.

While the false teacher may corrupt any sound Biblical doctrine, in this case, they corrupt the bedrock truth of the Lord's promised return and the final literal bodily resurrection of all the Lord's people to glory without sin unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last day. (Hebrews 9:28; 1 Peter 1:5) Denial of the Second Coming and our personal, individual resurrection, a personal individual work in every child of grace on that day, is a heresy to be rejected by all sound, Bible believing saints. (1 Corinthians 15:19)

Whether his false idea relates to the Second Coming and bodily resurrection or some other Bible truth, the false teacher will wrest the Scriptures (2 Peter 3:19) to force his own ideas into and onto Scripture and work to make the worst of errors seem to be true. Calling light darkness and darkness light doesn't alter the reality of light and darkness. (Isaiah 5:20)

Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. Rather

than believe the Bible's testimony and the cloud of historical witnesses (Hebrews eleventh chapter and Hebrews 12:1) to the truth, they appeal to the natural senses or even to the skeptical side of their hearers. "Surely if God really intended to end this world and raise the dead, He'd have done so by now." That people still die, that cemeteries constantly increase their "Population," is not a denial of the Lord's promised return. The Bible never reveals the precise date of the Lord's return. Instead Scripture commands believers to be faithful each day that they live, living today as if the Lord would return tonight. Scripture further teaches that the Lord's return is like a thief who burglarizes your home. He doesn't send you a notice telling you the precise date and time of his invasion of your home. If he did so, you have the police waiting to arrest him. He breaks into your home at a time when you least expect it, likely a time when you are not home. (1 Thessalonians 5:1-5) The Lord shall return at a time least expected.

As a matter of fact, the very point raised by the scoffer actually weighs against the scoffer, not for his errant idea. Things continuing at all testify to God's promise that seasons and many of the "Normal" cycles and rules of nature shall remain and predictably testify to God's faithfulness in maintaining His natural creation till He ends it at His time and on His terms. Yes, the scoffer does overstate his argument, actually contradicting his claim, for all things do not continue as they were from creation. Consider the Old Testament testimony of the Flood, a point that Peter will raise in the verses following our study passage. If God faithfully maintains His natural universe as He promised to Noah (Genesis 8:22), we have every reason to believe that He will be just as faithful to His promise of Second Coming and resurrection.

The fact that the false teacher and scoffer twists the Scriptures as described above should put the thinking believer on notice. Carefully examine the false teacher's argument. He will always reveal a flaw in his thinking, a false premise on which he builds his house of cards to deceive naïve and unsuspecting folks who are so foolish as to listen to his false teachings. "Critical thinking" is not a Bible principle in terms of the names of the various logical fallacies, but Scripture does in fact present credible truth that is in harmony with sound thinking. Any error and thus any false teacher's wrong-headed ideas will reveal logical fallacies to those who will carefully examine them in light of Biblical teaching. Over some sixty years of studying the Bible and examining many false ideas that people raise, I have observed that the more an idea departs from sound Bible teaching the more it will—it must—rely on logical fallacies to give it a wardrobe of believability to the unsuspecting.

In the case of the false teachers that Peter describes in our study passage and chapter, the scoffer carefully ignores Scriptures that affirm the Flood and other events that are documented in the

Old Testament, building their false arguments on a false conclusion about things that are limited to what a person may presently observe with his eyes. Recently in doing some internet searches, I ran across a glaring example of the false teacher's use of logical fallacies. The writer was attempting to prove the false idea of fatalistic predestination, wholly contradictory to Biblical predestination. In his entire thesis, not once did he address Biblical predestination, the consistent use of the word in our King James Bible. Instead, he built his whole argument for his fatalistic idea on a strained form of philosophical reasoning, as if he had no information whatever from Scripture on which to build. In fact, he didn't have any Scripture to support his false idea, so he had no other option than to ignore Scripture and try to prove fatalistic predestination by false reasoning. A thoughtful reader of the piece should readily see the problem. Given the fact that the King James Bible uses some form of the word "Predestinate" four times, all consistently referring to our being conformed to the image of God's Son at the Second Coming or our bodies being changed in a glorious manner, "adopted," at the Second Coming, "...to wit, the redemption of our body," (Romans 8:23 and context), the only logical reason that a man would wholly ignore these passages and attempt to prove his idea by pseudo-philosophy (Or sophistry) is that he knows that his ideas about predestination cannot be supported by Scripture.

When we use what the Lord has given us, a clear and divinely preserved Bible, and a "sound mind," (2 Timothy 1:7) human sophistry and false wresting of the Scriptures—or wholly ignoring the Scriptures as in the above example—will be seen and rejected by the thinking and studious Bible believer. Sadly all too many believers check their minds at the door when they enter Bible reading and study or when entering the church for preaching, fellowship, and worship. Scripture commands that we are to love God just as fully with our mind as with our heart. (Matthew 22:37; Mark 12:30; Luke 10:27) If we follow Jesus' words, we will avoid listening to sermons or reading the writings of someone who has demonstrated his false and stubborn penchant for error. (Mark 4:24. In this verse Jesus warns to avoid certain ideas by taking heed "**what**" we hear. You only take heed to what you hear by not hearing some things that you may reasonably know to be error by Scripture's teachings. In Luke 8:18, Jesus commands us to take heed "**how**" we hear. To hear the truth and subsequently refuse to believe and to obey leaves a believer without excuse and under the Lord's righteous and often severe chastening. Likewise, for a believer to knowingly continue "hearing" words from a man who proves to be a false teacher brings the Lord's righteous chastening) Scoffers and false teachers rob children of grace of their joy and seek to enslave them for personal gain. The gospel of grace proclaims liberty to captives and comfort to tired pilgrims who long for "Home."

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Worship service each Sunday
Joseph R. Holder

10:30 A. M.
Pastor