

# Gospel Gleanings, "...especially the parchments"

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## Heaven: Present Impact

*Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless. (2 Peter 3:14, KJV 1900)*

Occasionally, we may become so fixed in our thoughts on heaven that we fail to link that truth to our present life. Peter does not so fail. After giving a nicely detailed explanation of the Second Coming, he now applies that truth to our present life. If we believe in the Second Coming as taught in Scripture, what impact does that belief have on our present life? How might we expect to experience a different reaction to life and its rough spots and trials because of our belief in the Lord's "promise"? Peter answers the question in our study verse.

...*seeing that ye look for such things.* Our belief in heaven and the Second Coming is not a convenient myth, a spiritual or emotional "Placebo" to fool us into dealing with life's struggles. It is real. And our anticipation of it is equally real. Occasionally folks who either do not believe in the Second Coming or who seek to diminish its presence in Scripture will deny that Scripture mentions this truth. They strain to the breaking point to misrepresent such passages as John 5:28-29, First Corinthians 15, or 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. Peter will address this attitude shortly. (2 Peter 3:16) Not only does Scripture emphatically teach that we have every reason in faith to "...look for such things," but it likewise teaches that we have reason to "...look for *him*." (Hebrews 9:28) Imagine the dilemma of claiming to believe in Jesus and in Scripture, but then not believing in the Second Coming or our literal bodily resurrection at that day. It leaves a believer in the same dilemma as the atheist who just died and lies all dressed up in his casket. He's all dressed up, but he has nowhere to go if his belief is true.

Clearly, based on Peter's words, our believing in the Second Coming and looking, both for our Lord and for "...such things" as Peter has here taught, should impact our conduct. How so?

...*be diligent.* This belief does not promote a casual reaction in those who believe it. It should stir a clear attitude and conduct that stands on Scripture and on our strong conviction from those Scriptures. Paul makes a similar point at the conclusion of his defense/affirmation of the resurrection as a literal event.

*Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord. (1 Corinthians 15:58)*

For a western civilization, twenty-first century believer to think of the Lord's return and our literal, bodily resurrection, at worst, means being disbelieved or mildly ridiculed by an unbeliever—or a false believer—here and there. For Paul and first century Corinthian believers—or for Peter and his first century readers—it likely meant the difference between living a peaceable life or facing intense persecution for the belief.

... *that ye may be found of him in peace.* Peter is not nearly as concerned at how other believers will find us as with how our Lord will find us. In the unique dialect of the English language used by the King James translators, "ye" is the plural form of the second person pronoun. While a firm belief in the Second Coming may well give us individual peace of mind in the face of life's trials, Peter here intends a different point. His admonition addresses the collected body of believers to whom he wrote—and to us. A believer who neglects or abandons his belief in the Second Coming may well become callous and indifferent to the Lord's mercies, manifesting this indifference in angry, divisive attitudes and words against other believers. Jesus makes this point powerfully.

*But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken; The lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. (Luke 12:45-46)*

In the same breath as downgrading his expectation of the Lord's return, this servant begins to sinfully abuse his brothers and sisters, and to indulge in personal sins of the flesh. Jesus promises that His righteous judgment shall not overlook or ignore such wicked sins by one servant against another.

Think of this passage and consider the opposite mindset in the servant. Rather than thinking his Lord delays his return, the servant expects his Lord today or tomorrow. How might he treat his fellow-servants? How might he give strong priority to his Lord's stewardship assigned to him? If we insert ourselves into the dynamic of this lesson as servants, and think of Jesus as our absent, but

soon returning Lord, the lesson becomes clear. A deep, abiding belief in the Lord's return and in our literal, bodily resurrection imposes a strong, life-transforming influence onto us. And so it should.

Think of the simple and obvious point. If I truly expect to spend eternity with the Lord and with all of His beloved and redeemed children, including a brother or sister with whom I may not agree, how should that belief impact my attitude and conduct toward that believer today? Peter's admonition makes the righteous point. If we believe that we'll spend eternity together praising our beloved and righteous Savior in unimaginable joy and harmony, we will think it a more weighty matter to work to live with those brothers and sisters peacefully in the here and now. We go out of our way to live peaceably with our brothers and sisters now because we look forward to that day. Living peaceably with other believers does not mean that we constantly nudge them with one after another of our private beliefs or ideas and threaten their peace by expecting—if not demanding—that they go along with us. It might mean keeping that private pocket change in our pockets instead of parading it as if it were a million dollars. The burden of Jesus' lesson, and Peter's, rests on our shoulders, not on our fellow-believer. Our personal belief in this truth transforms our personal conduct toward our brothers and sisters in Christ.

...*without spot*. Peter sets the bar high with this point, but not too high. Think of this principle and contrast it with the popular notion of Christianity—by professing Christians—in our day. Yes, Scripture mentions our “besetting sin,” but it commands us to lay that sin aside, not foster it and rationalize it because it is so “besetting.” In effect, a large percent of professing Christians of our day choose willful ignorance regarding this question and strive to rationalize their particular sin rather than striving to overcome it and reach for the goal that Peter sets before us. Simply stated, “*without spot*” means no spot at all. Is this an unrealistic goal? Perhaps—perhaps not—but we must not consciously choose to ignore it and pretend that Peter didn't really write these words or command this attitude toward sin. Scripture consistently describes sin as an insidious and hungry adversary who is never satisfied with the ground it gains. Give sin an inch, and it will demand a foot. Give it a foot, and it will demand a yard. Give it a yard, and it will demand a mile. Oh, we've sterilized the favored sins of our culture by renaming them “habits” or “addictions” or whatever the latest cultural buzz word to avoid the obvious point; ***it is sin***. If we set our personal bar, our moral goal, just barely below “...without spot,” what happens to our actual conduct? We indulge this “acceptable” spot as if it were not sin at all, and we then proceed to look for the next sin that we might be able to sterilize as acceptable. We fulfill the “Slippery slope” cliché and lull ourselves to sleep, even as we slip over the edge of our self-created slope into the black hole of

sin. Since when does difficulty justify failure to work at a godly goal? Peter refused to compromise his command. So should we. Should we show mercy to sinners who confess their sins? Yes, if they also show repentance and strive to entrench that repentance in their life habits.

*Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him.* (Luke 17:3; emphasis added)

When we encounter sin in our lives or in the life of a brother or sister in the faith, do we in fact rebuke them? Or do we stumble over ourselves trying to convince them that it wasn't really such a bad sin after all? What did Jesus command? It seems clear that He associates our rebuke with the potential for the brother's repentance. When we grow soft on sin and refuse to rebuke it, we tacitly encourage the brother to continue in the sin, not repent. And, quite often, he gets that message and acts on it. The greatest threat to Christianity in our culture today does not lie in the growing carnality of the culture, or in the increasing hostility that we sense from centers of power in our culture. Our greatest threat lies within the camp of professing Christians who refuse to stand up against sin and rebuke it, regardless of who sins or what the sin may be. Could it be that the greatest need for repentance, Biblical repentance, is in the community of believers, not outside?

I must observe that the growing indifference to sin that I've described is occurring simultaneously with a growing hesitancy among Bible-believing Christians to preach, emphatically to preach the Biblical truth of the Lord's return. We hear tidal waves of “Left Behind” or other non-Biblical speculation, but we hear a deafening silence from more conservative, Biblical pulpits about the truth of Scripture's teachings on the very topic that gives muscle to our moral backbone and grace to our teaching on repentance. The corollary is no accident. Failure to teach one predicts failure to practice the other. Isn't that Peter's message?

...*and blameless*. Is there a difference between “spotless” and “blameless”? By using both words together, Peter reminds us that the two words describe different points of conduct. Spotless refers to how we actually live. Blameless refers to how others might interpret how we live. We might arrive at a degree of spotlessness, but, if our attitude toward sin is too lax, we might appear blameworthy for not more strongly rebuking sin and thereby urging brothers and sisters to repent. Are we afraid to rebuke sin? What are the consequences?

Little Zion Primitive Baptist Church  
16434 Woodruff  
Bellflower, California

Worship service each Sunday  
Joseph R. Holder

10:30 A. M.  
Pastor