

Gospel Gleanings, "...especially the parchments"

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The Benefit of Believing

Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. (1 Peter 2:6, KJV 1900)

Peter cites a rich prophecy from Isaiah that defined Jesus' coming some eight hundred years before the event. We can't predict events an hour in the future, but our timeless, eternal God knows every thought, word, and deed fully and regardless of whether the event is past or future. God revealed to Isaiah—and to us—a major purpose of Jesus' Incarnation as precisely as if the event had already occurred.

Skilled builders know that every building structure must be firmly interlocked to ensure the building's stability. If two sides of a building are not tied together, the building is liable to separate and fall. In the Incarnation, God placed His Son in the precise position to ensure that His purpose in the Incarnation would be unquestionably fulfilled. A contemporary eschatological movement (Eschatology refers to end times events) builds its whole fantasy structure on the idea that Jesus came, fully intending to set up a permanent world government that He would head, but the Jews' rejection of Him frustrated that plan, and He thus returned to heaven with plans to try again. This idea contradicts many Scriptures in both testaments, including this one. Jesus accomplished everything that He came to perform, as witnessed by His own words in His intercessory prayer. (John 17) Notice especially the following verse.

I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. (John 17:4)

If Jesus failed in His purpose for the First Advent, He didn't know it! I trust His words in inspired Scripture far more than relatively recent human imaginations.¹

New Testament writers associate this passage with another Old Testament prophecy to be found in Psalm 118:22.

This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. (Acts 4:11)

¹ This idea didn't exist prior to around 1828-30, making it eighteen centuries too late to be God's revealed truth.

This passage contradicts the modern notion that Jesus failed in His first coming and returned to heaven frustrated and defeated. Despite the Jews' rejection of Him, He nevertheless accomplished everything that He came to do.

...contained in the scripture. You will find this prophecy in Isaiah's writings.

Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste. (Isaiah 28:16)

To round out the citation, Paul also quotes this passage.

As it is written, Behold, I lay in Zion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. (Romans 9:33)

Additionally, we find a number of indirect references to these two Old Testament passages elsewhere in the New Testament. Clearly the inspired writers of the New Testament were directed to emphasize the obvious significance of these prophecies.

We may rightly stand on the clear Biblical declaration that Jesus returned to the Father with an unquestioned, "Mission accomplished" outcome after His first coming.

Examine Isaiah's words for the divine intent of Jesus' coming.

1. **He is a "...foundation stone."** Not only so, but He is a "...sure foundation." He is fully competent to uphold His work and purpose. This analogy leaves no basis for a defeated, frustrated Jesus.
2. **He is a "...tried stone."** He did not come as a cosmic experiment or trial balloon. He was put to the test and found to be sufficient.
3. **He is a "...precious corner stone."** On Him and on His shoulders rests the full weight of God's eternal purpose for His people. He is competent for the task. In this, He is precious. No value can be put on Him or on His work. "(For the redemption of their soul *is* precious, and it ceaseth for ever:)" (Psalm 49:8) Don't look

elsewhere for "...soul redemption." It only exists in this precious corner Stone.

The closing clause of this verse is different in each of its appearances, but the meaning is the same.

1. Isaiah 28:16, "...*he that believeth shall not make haste.*"
2. Romans 9:33, "...*whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.*"
3. 1 Peter 2:6, "...*he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.*"

What ideas come together in the three expressions that we see here? Someone who realizes danger and seeks safety will "...make haste" to get out of harm's way. Someone who doesn't know what to make of things that he sees may be confused and shame himself for not understanding it and thinking through how to get to know the problem and its solution. "Confounded" means perplexed or confused. One dictionary uses "Befuddled" as part of its definition of the word. The three inspired renditions of this prophecy all point to the state of mind that tries to make sense of God and His work apart from belief in Jesus, God's one and only sure, precious, foundation Corner Stone. Such a mind will be functionally paralyzed by fear and confused about how to find safety. In this fearful, confused state, the individual so described will "...make haste" to embrace any form of solution that he/she perceives as remotely giving relief. Judgments made in such a state of mind are seldom right.

Believing in Jesus and the full accomplishment of His purpose is consistently commanded in Scripture. Those whom God has touched by grace know that they have a problem, but they don't know the solution to that problem till they hear and believe the testimony of the New Testament gospel, as set forth in Scripture. Having confused the Biblical function of belief, many sincere Bible teachers today add more to the confusion than to the right solution. Scripture teaches that belief in Jesus and the truth of the gospel that proclaims Him is an **evidence** of the new birth. God performs the new birth sovereignly and solely through the work of the Holy Spirit. Subsequently, our hearing gives us evidence of our being born again. (John 5:24; 1 John 5:1) Our belief can't cause the new birth which God effected prior to our believing. To believe such an idea is a clear example of confusion. The blessing of believing in Jesus is the topic of our study passage, not believing in our personal belief. Paul, I believe the inspired author of Hebrews, adds to the clarity of our study.

For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. (Hebrews 4:3)

The consequence of our believing in Jesus is rest, not new birth. We rest from the endless frightening and hasty retreats that seek a never-found rest. We rest from confusion and shame at having a deep conviction to believe, but not quite knowing what—or Whom—to believe.

Someone has written, "If you do not fear God, you fear everything else. If you fear God, you fear nothing else." Good point. Fearing God in this sense is equivalent to believing Him. If you truly believe in God, believe Him and the true testimony of Scripture regarding Him, your faith is peacefully settled, "Anchored" in a precious, tried-and-found-to-be-reliable Corner Stone. If you do not believe in Him, you desperately chase from one phantom idea to the next, always seeking solid, reliable substance to believe, but never quite finding it.

Our belief in Him is not an automatic or divinely decreed event. It is an action that Scripture repeatedly commands us to do. When God sovereignly declares that He shall do something, He doesn't speak deceitfully and, in the next breath, tell us to do it. He does it! If He commands us in Scripture to believe in Jesus, He provides enabling grace and conviction, but He does not coerce us to so believe. No, based on Scripture, He commands us to believe in Him. In the new birth, He gives every regenerate child the ability to believe in Him, as well as a conviction, a hunger for Him.

Occasionally folks who believe in God's grace will compromise their conviction of grace and claim that anyone who hears the gospel and doesn't at least believe in Jesus from the testimony is not born again. This idea contradicts Scripture. Jesus Himself preached to a man on one occasion. Scripture states that Jesus loved, but the man walked away from Jesus' own preaching, not believing, but sorrowful. (Mark 10:21 and context) This idea smacks of incredible arrogance. The man who thinks that his testimony will be so powerful, apparently more so than Jesus', that no regenerate elect can possibly hear his testimony and not believe obviously thinks that his personal testimony is an amazing thing. Occasionally, proponents of this idea the claim that this man was one of God's elect, but not yet born again. The evidence refutes the claim. The man witnessed to a nearly lifelong devotion to God's moral code in Moses' Law. He sought out Jesus for answers to his questions. And he left the conversation with Jesus under a stated sadness at Jesus' commandment to him. None of these attitudes or behaviors in any way resembles an unregenerate person. The argument is as weak as the argument that the seed sown in problematic soil depicts unregenerate people. How does an unregenerate person "...become unfruitful"? (Matthew 13:22; Mark 4:19) A seed must bear fruit before it can "...become unfruitful." No unregenerate person possesses the ability to bear fruit at all. Do you believe in Jesus? Celebrate His peaceful rest.

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Worship service each Sunday
Joseph R. Holder

10:30 A. M.
Pastor