

Gospel Gleanings, "...especially the parchments"

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Willful Ignorance

For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. (2 Peter 3:5-7, KJV 1900)

None of us is all-knowing. As much as we'd like to pride ourselves in knowing, there are some things that we simply do not know. Ah, and there are some of us who think that we know far more than we really know. (1 Corinthians 8:2) In our study verse, Peter introduces a third category. Some people consciously choose to ignore anything that doesn't mesh with what they have already decided to believe, factual or not. They conclude certain ideas based on personal reasons more than solid evidence. Then they consciously choose to ignore anything that contradicts their preconceptions. This selective self-deception Peter associates with the false prophet of the second chapter. In some crucial fact, every false prophet must consciously choose to ignore Biblical truth and Biblical facts so as to give an appearance of Biblical support for his errant ideas. Further, he must find ways to convince his followers that his wrested view of Scripture is true, so he must carefully veil his willful ignorance from obvious perception by his hearers. You will frequently hear a false prophet's defenders claim "He is such a good man. You misunderstand him." Would anyone follow a false prophet if they knew the Biblical truth of his error and of his motives?

A thorough study of the error of the false prophet's ideas in this chapter will guide us to invaluable lessons in our study of Scripture and in our application of Scripture's truths to our lives, aside from equipping us to identify and avoid the snares of the false prophet's errant teachings. How did Peter identify that these people were teaching error? And what specific truths of Scripture did the false prophet "willingly" ignore that would refute his error? In our study this week, we shall examine two Biblical truths that the false prophet chose to willfully ignore. We shall reserve the third Biblical truth for our next study.

1. *...by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water.* Peter's first Biblical truth to refute the false prophet's error is the Biblical fact of creation. The false prophet taught that nothing ever changes. Everything in the material world has always been pretty much the same. The most

glaring Biblical fact that contradicts this idea is creation itself. Scripture simply and clearly teaches that God created this material universe. The first sentence in the Bible reads "*In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.*" (Genesis 1:1) In this one verse, we learn that God created time ("In the beginning..."), space ("the heaven"), and matter ("the earth"). Nothing in Scripture teaches that the Bible reveals the details of how God created the material universe; it simply states the fact. Time, space, and matter as we know them in our physical world had a beginning, and that beginning was God. "*Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.*" (Hebrews 11:3) This verse does not say that we know all about how God created the physical universe, but it makes belief in the simple fact that it began with God a matter of Biblical faith. Scripture rejects the gnostic idea that the physical world was a cosmic error. It also rejects the gnostic idea that everything material is inherently evil and contrary to God. (Psalm 19, one of many Scriptures that remind us that our physical world declares the glory of God, its Creator) Genesis 1:1 alone is sufficient to utterly refute the false prophet's "...all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." If the false prophet chooses to claim that he accepts creation, but that nothing has changed since creation, he contradicts the details of Genesis, chapters one and two, days two-six. These chapters document God's wise refinement of His natural creation. Thus, by the time you read the first two chapters of the Bible, you should be fully equipped to understand that the false prophet's idea contradicts Scripture and should therefore be soundly rejected. The false prophet chooses willful ignorance of this truth.

2. *Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished....*" The second Biblical truth that the false prophet

willfully chose to ignore was the flood. Peter could have used man's sin and the Biblical documentation in Genesis 3 of the fall's impact on the material world as evidence, but he goes to a far more obvious truth. Scripture devotes four chapters, Genesis 6-9, to an account of the flood. Whatever form or appearance the earth had prior to the flood was materially changed by that epochal event. Despite man's scoffing at the Bible, scientists frequently find evidence in high mountains of water plants and animals. Scripture teaches the fact of the flood, and nature affirms it. And false prophets contradict the Biblical evidence. Although the Bible never claims to be a science textbook or to give unbounded explanations of the scientific data of our natural world, where Scripture does offer information on the material world, that information is consistently in accord with scientific facts. In fact, a significant number of scientific facts are presented in the routine accounts of Scripture that human knowledge, science, did not accept for centuries. In the mid-to-late nineteenth century a group of scientists published some sixty or seventy "Scientific facts" that they claimed contradicted the Bible and justified their utter rejection of the Bible account of creation or of God. In the late twentieth century, Christian apologists reviewed that list and documented that every claimed "Scientific fact" contained in this list was now refuted by more modern scientific "Discovery." The supposed facts upon which the old scientists rejected Scripture were all rejected by modern science. Thus, their rejection of Scripture based on their data was just as false as their claimed scientific "Facts." The believer in God and in Scripture may rightly stand on the integrity of Scripture's record about God's natural creation and His new, spiritual creation.

Peter's two primary examples to prove that Scripture contradicts the false prophet's error build on one common thread of truth, "...by the word of God..." I believe that Peter here is referring to God's power; He speaks, and His "word" makes things happen, or things to exist that did not exist prior to His "word." In each step of creation recorded in Genesis 1, we read one common point, "...God said..." Though Genesis doesn't give the details of God's creation, what it does contain reports a basic truth. God, not a cosmic coincidence, accident, or explosion, is responsible for this material world in which we live. And, as we read Genesis 6-9, we likewise discover God speaking to Noah and giving him the command to build the ark to preserve his family and land animals

from the flood that He would send as a righteous judgment against the depraved wickedness of the world before the flood.

No less today, the godly, "...pure mind..." believer must equip himself/herself with Scripture to detect and to reject the endless false teachings of one false prophet after another, a trend that Peter warns shall invade every generation of believers. (2 Peter 2:1-3) And, sadly, we must take notice that Peter also warns us that "...many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of." While we should soundly reject false prophets, we should grieve for the many naïve believers whom they deceive and pray for their recovery. Part of our effort to recover them should be our own studious Bible study that reveals and refutes the errors that the false prophet teaches. In this effort, Peter's detailed confrontation and refutation of one false prophet error gives us a powerful example to follow in constructing our confronting and refuting of any false teaching from any false prophet. A casual Bible reading will not uncover either the error or the Biblical grounds for rejecting it. False prophets celebrate the casual Bible reader.

Put your personal Bible study habits to a simple test. If you were to confront someone who told you that he believes that the material world in which we live is effectively unchanging, that things in it that we observe today are pretty much the same that they have ever been, would you disagree? Would you agree? Or would you side-step the point and give him the relativistic "This is not really a fundamental issue; you are free to believe whatever makes you happy"? Would you go immediately to Genesis the first ten chapters and find two glaring Biblical facts that refute the error?

Peter reserves his strongest objection to this error for last. If things continue in a relatively unchanged form, we must confront the implication that matter is eternal, that it didn't have a supernatural beginning. And that false conclusion would lead us to believe that matter in its present form shall not end. We would thus not only contradict the first two Bible objections that Peter raised, but we would also be forced to deny the Bible's teaching regarding the Second Coming. When Paul discovered that some of the people in the Corinthian Church did not believe in a literal, bodily resurrection, how did he react? Did he brush the idea aside and suggest that the question was not important? Or did he confront and refute it? Peter joins Paul in making the doctrine of the Second Coming a bedrock truth of Scripture that cannot be rejected by the "pure" minded believer.

Little Zion Primitive Baptist Church
16434 Woodruff
Bellflower, California

Worship service each Sunday
Joseph R. Holder

10:30 A. M.
Pastor