

Gospel Gleanings, "...especially the parchments"

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Willing Conscious 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)

In our supposedly advanced "Information Age," the idea of anyone being willingly ignorant of anything seems strangely incredible. However, in spiritual matters, the problem is no less present today than in the first century. With such folks, if sound factual—and Biblical—information contradicts a person's personal beliefs or personal private interpretations of Scripture, sinful pride prefers to consciously ignore the contradictory information and hold onto one's ideas. The self-delusion of such a mindset is hard to grasp. Do these people really think that their private interpretations will change God's mind? Oh, we forget. They think they have a special revelation directly from God, so their ideas simply cannot be wrong. Yes, I've talked with a few such people who have defended their bizarre ideas by this very claim. They are quite free with their claim, "The Lord revealed this to me." They, perhaps also willingly, ignore the fact that God reveals His truth and will to His people in Scripture. Any claimed revelation or private interpretation that contradicts Scripture manifests by its character that it is not a revelation from the Lord. Sadly often people will form an opinion and then wrest Scripture to lend the appearance of support to their private opinions. This is often the case when someone holds to ideas that are not commonly believed by the Lord's church. (1 Timothy 3:15) Often the lack of historical or sound Biblical support, if not "Covered" by wrested Biblical interpretations, will be covered by attitudes of arrogance, sophistication, high intellect, or extraordinary pretenses of virtue. When a person manifests too much of these traits, they set off alarms in my mind that is mirrored in the Shakespearean line, "Me thinks thou dost protest too much."

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. What specifically did these people knowingly ignore? Their core error had to do with their denial of the Second Coming. To make a show of support for this error, they appealed to the senses of their hearers, not to the emphatic teachings of Scripture in the Old Testament. Remember; they claimed that everything continues in the world around us without change. Nothing ever changes. Everything

remains the same. First, Peter refutes their claim by the Biblical account of creation. If things remain the same, matter and the material world in which we live had no beginning. The scientific laws of thermodynamics refute this claim, as does the Biblical account of creation. People may impose many private interpretations onto Genesis 1, but the record of Scripture there systematically affirms that God created matter, time, and space, (Genesis 1:1) and, subsequent to creating these three building blocks, He molded them into our present natural world. If creation is true, things have not continued for ever as they are today.

Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished. The second Biblical fact that the scoffers chose to willingly ignore was the reality of the flood in Noah's time. Such a massive event unquestionably altered the shape and texture of the material world in which we live. The first ten chapters of Genesis contain a significant list of events that altered the shape of our material world. Every change contradicted the scoffers' fundamental premise on which they denied the Biblical promise of the Second Coming.

If God created the material universe, if He chose to change it by various cataclysmic events over time since creation, the Biblical record confronts and refutes the scoffers' claim, the very foundation on which they built their objection to Peter's and the other apostles' teaching on the Second Coming.

Logical analysis of ideas requires that the analyst examine every facet of the error he is confronting. Don't stop with the superficial. In the analogy of the spider and the spider's web, don't stop with the cobweb, look for the spider. Peter begins his confrontation of this error with the scoffers' denial of the Second Coming, but he shortly goes directly to the heart of the scoffers' house built on sand and begins systematically to dig the sand from under the scoffers' faulty and non-factual reasoning. The Biblical record of both creation and the Flood contradict the scoffers' premise. If his premise is faulty, his conclusions are not valid.

But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store. The present stability of the material world is not a testimony to the idea that nothing ever changes. It rather

witnesses to the very truth that the scoffers chose to willingly ignore. God, the Creator of this world, is maintaining it according to His faithfulness until He has finished His purpose for it and His use of it. Example. According to the information provided by scientific observation, our earth is spinning at the amazing pace of one full revolution for each twenty-four hour cycle. That is faster than most passenger jet airplanes travel! Yet as I write this piece, I'm not sitting in my home strapped into a seat lest I fly off against the ceiling by the centrifugal force of the earth's spinning. God's laws of gravity and other natural and orderly processes maintain my world so that I sit here comfortably and peacefully typing away, praying that my words will bless some reader here and there. I don't give a thought that, at any moment, the centrifugal force of the earth could slam me up against the ceiling of my home or off into space.

...reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. As God created this universe, and as He has changed it in various ways over time and presently maintains it, He shall also burn it up at some future point in time. I was born in 1941. As a child in elementary school, we were required periodically to practice certain drills that would prepare us in the event of a nuclear attack against our country. As the power of an atomic bomb became public knowledge, I recall hearing or reading about various preachers who thought they knew with certainty that wicked men who held their finger on the trigger of those bombs would one day pull that trigger and destroy our whole world by atomic warfare. They honestly believed that atomic war would be the vehicle that ends this world and introduces the Second Coming. Many Christians believed these foolish and non-Biblical teachings, living in panic at the idea. Scripture never teaches that depraved mankind will end this world. God created it, He has altered it, He presently maintains it, and He shall bring it to an end in His time and in His way. That, my friends is actually the assuring message of 2 Peter Chapter 3.

Notice that the fires that shall destroy this earth shall also serve as God's righteous judgment and perdition of "ungodly men." Peter in no way suggests that the Second Coming shall be a time of fear or dread for the children of grace. The Lord's people have nothing to fear in that day. As Peter develops the truth of the Second Coming in the later section of this chapter, he will make that point with great clarity and comfort.

In refuting the scoffers of his day, Peter also teaches another truth that Scripture repeatedly affirms. Simultaneous with the Lord's raising His beloved children and taking them to glory with Him, He shall raise the wicked and sentence them to their deserved punishment. The passage refutes all variations of universal salvation, the unbiblical notion that every human being shall eventually be saved. In this unbiblical theory, either hell shall be an empty place, or hell simply doesn't exist. The

whole process that Peter describes is orderly and right. Godly people often look around them, see wicked people indulging their depraved appetites with no apparent consequences, and wonder. Peter reminds us that, however long delayed, the Lord's righteous judgment shall surely and righteously bring the wicked to their deserved day of accounting for their sins in His righteous judgment.

Paul teaches the same truth.

And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day. (2 Thessalonians 1:7-10)

At the very same event, the saints shall rest in quiet and peaceful joy with their God and Savior, and the wicked shall stand before God in the bright light of His righteous judgment. *"...rest with us, when..."*

In Jesus' language, the same truth shines brightly.

Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. (Matthew 25:34)

For the Lord's people, the Second Coming shall be one glorious experience from beginning to end. They will hear their Lord and Savior welcome them to their eternal and glorious rest with Him for eternity. They shall face no fear, no dread, and no uncertainty. Their eternal state was settled "...from before the foundation of the world." They will not fret over who is with them or who is not. They will not arise with fear and dread, not knowing the outcome. They shall arise to the welcoming and comforting words, "Come ye blessed..."

The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished. (2 Peter 2:9)

Think of the most annoying and difficult temptation that you face, perhaps your "besetting" sin that seemingly refuses to say no when it begins to assault you. Then think of the wicked people you've known who seem to run rampant from one wicked, hurtful deed to the next. Two almost impossible things, right? In one sentence, Peter tells us that our God knows how to take care of both problems. Hallelujah! What a Savior!

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Worship service each Sunday
Joseph R. Holder

10:30 A. M.
Pastor