

**070408 Final Things: What do you expect? 22/14 April 8, 2007GG**  
**Gospel Gleanings, "...especially the parchments"**

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**Final Things: What do you expect?**

*For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.* ([Ro 8:19-23](#))

Most of us at one time or another have engaged in a "What will heaven be like?" conversation. Typically people take this conversation down one of two paths. The first path claims full ignorance. It professes that we know nothing whatever about heaven, and there is no way to know other than the belief that it will be amazingly good. Advocates of this idea will often quote Paul's words in [1Co 2:9](#), "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." Of course Paul was not writing about heaven when he wrote these words, and further in the very next verse he said, "But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit..." Thus the person's claim of having no knowledge whatever is immediately contradicted in the next sentence. What Paul is teaching in this context has to do with the unregenerate person's lack of ability to know spiritual things, making Paul's "But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit..." comment perfectly logical.

The other path that this conversation often takes is the emotional or sentimental path. Advocates of this path will talk endlessly about how they want to go to heaven to renew their love and fellowship with precious relatives and friends who have died. A rather old hymn in some of our hymnals depicts this sentimental view of heaven with a bit more sentimentality than most of us would consider appropriate. Each verse ends with an "In going there to see..." listing various relatives in order, mother, father, etc., followed by classmates, ending with the final person whom the author of the words wants to see, "... my Savior." To be bluntly honest, shouldn't the *first person* we want to see when we arrive in heaven be our Lord? As a youth in my faith, I recall a conversation between a couple of older men in the faith. They were discussing personal identity in heaven. Will we know parents, siblings, spouses, and beloved relatives and friends? One of the men mentioned an aunt who raised him, saying, "If I thought I wouldn't know her in heaven, I wouldn't want to go there." This attitude sadly characterizes the sentimental attitude toward heaven.

Scripture rejects both ideas. I believe that Scripture affirms individual identity in heaven. We will not all be a countless multitude of clones with no apparent individuality or identity. However, Scripture also affirms that earthly bonds will not carry over into heaven. Study Jesus' dialogue with the Sadducees regarding the woman who was married to several brothers who each died.

*For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.* Throughout this context the words "creature" and "creation" appear several times. Both words are translated from the same Greek word, so there is not factual or contextual basis on which to distinguish the two words. It is possible, based on Second Peter, third chapter, that Paul's "whole creation" comment here may refer to the whole of the created universe, meaning that the physical universe will be melted down and recreated at the Second Coming. That conclusion, however, falls more in the category of theological development than contextual interpretation.

Strong's exhaustive concordance and lexicon defines "earnest expectation" as "anxious and persistent expectation." Zodhiates illustrates the emphasis of the word, "...Attentive or earnest expectation or looking for, as with the neck stretched out and the head thrust forward..."<sup>72</sup> Only those who have been touched by divine grace and made sensitive by grace of their spiritual state can or will experience such an "earnest expectation."

The "waiting" involved in this passage reminds us that the final epoch in God's incredible and eternal design has not yet been fulfilled. It has indeed begun, but the final chapter has not yet unfolded. That grand event is the theme of this context. Presently we live in the constant conflict between "vanity" and "hope." In a particular way this conflict integrates with the intense conflict that Paul described in his personal experience in the seventh chapter of Romans.

What are we waiting for? What is yet to come? Paul describes that final day as a time for the "... manifestation of the sons of God." It is rather easy for us to identify some of God's children in this life. Their obvious gentle kindness and devoted faith to their Lord shouts their identity as children of God. There are others who leave us in doubt. We cannot with Biblical authority say that they are either saved or not saved. Many of the errant ideas in contemporary theological circles that attempt to identify every one of God's elect in the here and now demonstrate the vanity of human pride. Advocates of this idea want to know all of God's elect now, so they invent non-Biblical ideas that they can rationalize through which to claim that they can know whether a person is or is not one of God's elect. If we can come to such knowledge now, why would Paul indicate that it will not be known or manifested till a future time and event? Chuck Swindoll makes an interesting observation on this point. We will all discover at least two surprises when we get to heaven. The first surprise is that we will see people there whom we did not expect to be there, and the second surprise is that some folks whom we expected to see there will be absent!

"...by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope...." We live in hope of that day now. Hope as used in Scripture is often misrepresented and misunderstood. It is not mere wishful thinking. Rather it is more akin to the idea in Paul's "earnest expectation" term in this passage. Hope is no better than the reality to which it looks. If we hope for a future and wholly fictional idea, our hope is cruel and empty. Hope takes on value only to the extent to which it grasps a concept of future reality.

What is the future reality in Paul's teaching that makes our present hope in the midst of conflict so invaluable? *Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.* Be it our physical bodies that shall be transformed in the resurrection, or be it the whole natural created universe, the future is altogether full of incredible treasures for the family of God. Given the contextual reference to the resurrection of our physical bodies, I am a bit more inclined to believe that Paul had the physical literal resurrection in mind when he wrote these thoughts. Based on the third chapter of Second Peter, I am inclined to believe that the whole material universe will be melted down and recreated without the devastating effects of sin that we now see on it. However in this context it appears that Paul is dealing more specifically with the literal resurrection of our bodies.

...waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. In First Corinthians fifteenth chapter Paul deals with the literal bodily resurrection in greater detail than we find anywhere else in Scripture. However, [Ho 13:14](#) refers to the resurrection in terms of redemption, similar to Paul's use of the term in our study passage.

*I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.*

When Jesus died for our sins, He paid the price necessary for our "redemption," but He has not yet taken full custody or possession of his full purchase. Paul himself uses this terminology quite clearly.

*Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory. ([Eph 1:14](#), KJV)*

Notice Paul's careful description of our salvation in financial or "redemption" terms. The "possession" has clearly already been "purchased," but it has not yet been "redeemed." When the trumpet blows and the graves open at the Last Day, Jesus will claim the final segment of what (more accurately "whom") He purchased at Calvary. Not only did He purchase our souls, He also purchased our bodies, giving Him full right to claim what He purchased when He chooses to exercise His legal/fiduciary right to claim what He has purchased.

Our understanding of this amazing transaction, full redemption, lies at the foundation of our Biblical hope. With solid grounds we look forward joyfully and expectantly to that amazing day! "Come quickly Lord Jesus!"

Elder Joe Holder