

**LIVING THE LIVING WORD**  
**Bible-Based Bible Study and Application**

**Grace Chapel**  
**Orange, CA**

**Mr. Timothy R. Nichols**  
**Spring 2008**

**PETER**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

As we continue looking at New Testament study and application of the Bible, we come to Peter. Peter is especially helpful to us today, because today we are surrounded by people who want to de-historicize the Bible, claiming that it is just a set of stories meant to make a moral point. Peter is at some pains to deny this, and explain the importance of understanding the Bible on its own terms—as actual history.

**2. PETER’S USE OF THE BIBLE**

Peter begins his epistle by making it clear that he’s addressing all believers and reminding them of the resources God has given them to enable them to live the Christian life. Because God has given them such wealth, Peter challenges them to grow in Christian character. In order to do this, they must meditate on the provision God has made for them, and the result of doing so will be abundant reward.

Because of the great reward at stake, Peter continues to remind them of these things even though he knows that they already know. In fact, he intends to make sure they continue to receive reminders after he’s died (this is one of the purposes of the book).

It is important that they remember the Christian message because of where it comes from. Peter and the other apostles didn’t just cobble together a religion by stitching together some old stories; they *saw* Jesus for themselves. In fact, three of them saw Him in His glory on the Mount of Transfiguration, and heard God Himself give testimony to who Jesus is, confirming the prophetic word by acting in history. Peter wants them to give careful attention to Scripture, because no prophecy of Scripture can be interpreted however some human wants—it’s not from men, but from God. The prophets themselves said what the Holy Spirit moved them to say.

2 Peter 2

Unfortunately, there were, and are, also false prophets, and Peter has a few things to say about such people.

Notice the point of the first series of historical examples in vv. 4-8. Peter states his premise at the end of verse 3, and then begins verse 4 with “if,” followed by “and...and...and...” The other shoe doesn’t drop until verse 9, confirming the premise: God will judge the unjust and preserve the godly. He always has.

Peter continues his discussion of these people with a vivid description of their corruption, and reminds his readers of a historical pattern, another person like this: Balaam. These are the sorts of people, says Peter, that a talking donkey can correct. Believers who are enticed away by such a person wind up in miserable condition, Peter says, much more corrupt than if they were unbelievers.

## 2 Peter 3

Peter writes to remind them again to heed the Scriptures. He warns them that there will always be people who have willfully forgotten the past, and therefore deny God's future judgment. This is no small thing. The world of Noah's day was preserved by the word of God, and then destroyed at God's command. The same thing is true today: our world is preserved by the word of God, and will one day be destroyed by it. We ought not to forget. The people of Noah's day did not think there was a coming judgment either, and look what happened to them.

Peter wants his readers to remember, though, that the Lord will always make good, and that the coming judgment will destroy the earth, and to conduct themselves accordingly, looking toward the new heavens and the new earth. He closes by urging them to heed his warning and grow in the Lord.

## Summary

Ask yourself: how does the argument of 2 Peter work if the stories he refers to never actually happened? If they're just stories designed to teach a moral point, does the book still make sense?

It does not. Peter has been very careful to say that they "did not follow cunningly devised fables." He has accused those who do not remember God's past actions of *willfully* forgetting. This is not simple amnesia; it's amnesia with an agenda, Peter says. The people who say that these stories are just clever stories designed to make a moral point are *exactly* the people Peter is writing against.

Peter is not merely offering an interpretation of some ancient texts. He also gives us eyewitness testimony of Jesus' glory and the Father's voice on the mountain, saying "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Peter tells us that his eyewitness testimony is of a piece with the vision of history he is setting forth. These stories really happened, and the God who promised the Flood will perform the future judgments He has promised as well.

## **3. THIS WEEK'S CHALLENGES**

### Your Daily Walk

This week, make an effort to make the Bible stories you know a part of your lifestyle of reflection on Scripture. Look for parallels between Bible stories and life.

### Honing Your Skills (30-60 min.)

As you continue your lifestyle of reflection on Scripture, try to reflect on the psalm sometimes when you're not actually looking at it. See if you can reconstruct

the thought process of the psalm in your head. As you do this, think over what you might say to someone if they ask you what Psalm 139 is about.

Reading (1-2 hrs.)

Read chapters 3-6 in Ryken. This will complete his section on narrative. If you're feeling a little dizzy after the first couple of chapters, the next few may help by giving some more specifics.

Heavy-Duty Homework (2-3 hrs.)

We've just looked at how Peter used the story of the Flood to make a very practical point for the Christian lives of his readers. What other biblical authors refer to the Flood, and what points are they making? If you have access to a concordance (or the internet), you can search for words like "Noah" or "flood." Below you'll find a list of references to get you started. Don't forget to read around these references for their context.

Genesis 6:1-9:17

Isaiah 54:9

Luke 17:26-27

1 Chronicles 1:4

Ezekiel 14:14, 20

Hebrews 11:7

Psalms 29:10

Matthew 24:37-39

## 4. LAST WEEK'S CHALLENGES

Your Daily Walk

Last week, I challenged you to make reflection on Scripture a part of your daily life. How's that going?

Honing Your Skills (30-60 min.)

For those of you who are working with Psalm 139, what did you do to make reflecting on it a part of your lifestyle? Note cards? Sticky notes? Record yourself reading it, and play it back? Something else entirely? Share your ideas.

Did it work?

What difference did it make?

Reading (1-2 hrs.)

Tough reading, wasn't it? The wealth of specific (and familiar) biblical examples helps, but even so, it can be difficult. What did you learn? How do you think it might help you?

Heavy-Duty Homework (2-3 hrs.)

What did you find in your examination of the Old Testament backdrop of Romans 1-3?

- What does "the just shall live by faith" mean (1:17)?
- What is the context of the passages in Romans 3:10-18?