

NOTES AND QUESTIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP STUDY IN THE SECOND LETTER OF PETER –

CHAPTER ONE

In the first letter Peter discussed why the word of God is so important, and what effect our knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ through the word can have in our lives particularly when we are living under pressure. That pressure as we have seen can be from a vicious Emperor, or life at home with an unbelieving partner. Now in the second letter Peter explores more closely how our knowledge of the word has its effect, and the source, dangers and characteristics of false knowledge.

One of the fascinating aspects of Peter's two letters is their marked difference in style. The first book is written in polished Greek, the second is much more basic. This has led some theologians who do not accept the inspiration of scripture to say that the two books must have been written by different people. This would make at least one of the opening statements of the two books, which claim that each was written by the apostle Peter, untrue. If the first verse is untrue, why believe the rest of the book? The answer is very simple. In I Pet.5:12, Peter explained that Silvanus was his writer. No writer is mentioned in the second book, so presumably Peter, once an uneducated Galilean fisherman, had now learned enough Greek to be able to write his message down for himself. We would expect the style to be different.

Before looking at chapter one in detail, I suggest that you divide it into its natural divisions and give each section a title in which you try to capture the key idea as it seems to you at first sight. I suggest the following divisions - verses 1-3; 4-7; 8-11; 12-18; 19-21. Now let us look at each section more closely.

Section 1 – (1:1-3)

Q.1 How is Peter's introduction to his second letter different from the first? How do the differences help to emphasise important points he is about to make? How does Peter describe himself in this letter? What was the difference between a bond-servant and a slave?(Exod.21)

Q.2 How does Peter compare himself to us? What was the secret of his standing before God? What is the secret of our own standing? Why would his way of addressing his audience be so encouraging to those who read his letter?

Q.3 In what way is Peter's greeting similar to Paul's in many of his letters?(I Cor.1:3; II Cor.1:2; Gal.1:3) What according to Peter is the source of the blessings he wants for his readers? Putting verses one and two together, what then is the secret of blessing?

Q.4 How does Peter develop this idea in verse 3? For what has God given us His power? What again is the secret of this happening in our lives? Is it just knowledge which makes us godly? What means does God use to bring this about? How does this work out in practice?

Section 2 – (1:4-7)

Q.5 What are the 'these' of verse 4? This verse describes a series of causes and effects. Put them in order and explain in simple words what each step means.

Q.6 How many times does the word 'knowledge' come between verses 1 and 11? What kind of knowledge is being talked about here? What statements are made about knowledge and what it can do for us?

Q.7 Again Peter describes a series of steps we can take in our Christian lives. List them in order and explain how each one leads on to the next one. What has to be present before we can take the first step?

Section 3 – (1:8-11)

Q.8 How does verse 8 sum up the whole process Peter has been describing? What else does God want to do apart from giving us these qualities? What on the other hand is the reason for us lacking these same qualities?

Q.9 The same word comes in both verses 5 and 10. What is it? Does it mean we have to work to secure our salvation? How can we be sure we are saved according to this passage?

Section 4 – (1:12-18)

Q.10 What according to Peter is the task of the pastor-teacher? How exactly can we accomplish it? Why does he have a sense of urgency about his message? How does he anticipate that his ministry can be continued after his death? What does this teach us about what happens to our ministry after we have moved on?

Q.11 What special occasion is Peter recalling in verses 16-18?(Matt.17) Why does he refer to it? What is his most important memory of that amazing day? How will him recalling this help his audience? What does this teach us about the use or misuse of personal testimony of spiritual experience?

Section 5 – (1:19-21)

Q.12 Are we at a disadvantage compared to Peter if we have not personally been on the Mount of Transfiguration? What will the word of God do for us according to verse 19? What is the 'morning star'?(Rev.22:16)

Q.13 Does this passage mean that we should not try to study the Bible on our own? What does this teach about how the scriptures came to be written? How then are we to approach Bible study? How will this be important in learning to deal with false teaching, the topic of the next two chapters?