

Feed My Sheep: 1 & 2 Peter

Major Themes in 1 & 2 Peter

Lesson #13 for June 24, 2017

Scriptures: Isaiah 53:4-6,9; Leviticus 11:44; 16:16-19; Romans 13:1-7; 1 Corinthians 14:40; 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

1. With this lesson we conclude our study of 1 & 2 Peter. In these two letters, Peter took a very practical approach to dealing with two major problems that his readers were facing: 1) Sporadic persecution taking place against Christians, and 2) The challenge of false teachers arising within the church. Peter dealt with these issues in practical, yet theologically appropriate, ways. It is interesting to note that though Peter talked about the final judgment of the wicked and the final reward of the righteous which we know will take place at the third coming of Jesus after the millennium, there is no evidence that Peter ever knew anything about the millennium or the third coming of Jesus. (See Revelation 20.)
2. The *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* has chosen five major themes to be dealt with in this lesson:
 - 1) The suffering of Jesus that led to our salvation;
 - 2) Our practical response to the knowledge that God will judge our actions at the last judgment;
 - 3) The hope we have in the soon return of Jesus;
 - 4) Order in society and in the church; and
 - 5) The role Scripture has in providing guidance in our lives.
3. Read 1 Peter 1:2,8-9,18-19; 2:22-25; 3:18. Peter assured his readers that they have been chosen by God to be saved. Although they did not personally know Jesus Christ, a life of faith, trusting in His life and death, had set them free from their worthless former lives. After living a perfect life, Christ “carried our sins [Was that even before they were committed?] in His body” to the cross so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. Christ did this to lead us back to God to be partakers of the divine image. How does that work? Can sins be carried?
4. Read Isaiah 53:4-6,9. Do Christians today think that Christ’s death was “punishment sent by God”? What do these verses teach us? Why did Peter refer to them in 1 Peter 2:22-24? Was Christ carrying all the sins of the world on His head or back as He was dying?
5. In the times of the Old Testament, people took a lamb as a sin offering to the courtyard of the tabernacle and later to the temple. They confessed their sins on the head of the lamb; and then, the lamb was sacrificed; and the blood of the lamb symbolically carried their sins which were then placed on the horns of the altar of burnt offering and at its base. On the Day of Atonement, (Leviticus 16:16-19) those sins were symbolically removed, placed on the head of the scapegoat, and carried away to be eliminated from the camp of Israel.
6. What does it mean to say that sins accumulate at the base of the altar? What does it mean to be ransomed? (See 1 Peter 1:18-19. Compare 2 Corinthians 5:21.)
7. The idea that Jesus Christ died for our sins has been a most precious teaching to Christians down through the ages. Various views have been espoused regarding how this actually works. The Roman Catholic Church has taught that by paying a fee, called an indulgence, one could buy forgiveness for a sin even before one actually committed that sin. Since Jesus died almost 2000 years ago and we are still committing sins today, did Jesus, in effect, buy

indulgences for our sins? Indulgences are stated to reduce one's "time in purgatory." In the 3rd century, an indulgence could be granted by a Christian martyr to someone who had backslidden from the church. However, there is more to salvation than just forgiveness. *Salvation* means healing!

8. There is plenty of evidence in Scripture to suggest that we cannot earn our salvation by any kind of human behavior. Salvation comes only through faith in a personal Savior, Jesus Christ. Christ, in effect, becomes our Substitute.
9. How does substitution really work? What is being substituted for what? In the larger setting of the great controversy, the life and death of Jesus proved the falseness of the accusations and claims of Satan as first recorded in Genesis 3 including Genesis 3:4 that God has been lying. By understanding the accusations and claims of Satan and then accepting and believing the answers which God has provided, we realize the truth and by faith develop an ever increasing trust/faith in God. We love Him and daily seek to know more about His character and government; and, thus, by beholding Him through the power of the Holy Spirit, we become changed into His image. (See GC 555.1.) Instead of sinking down ever deeper into sin, we can rise to immortal life. Thus, our salvation takes the place of our condemnation and destruction.
10. Even though many believe otherwise, this is not something that takes place in the books of heaven completely apart from any participation or any change on our part. If God could safely remove our sins and turn us into saints without our consent or participation, He surely would have done so long ago. He would have done that to Lucifer when he first started to sin in heaven. Doesn't God want to save everyone? (2 Peter 3:9) But, He will not violate our freedom by doing that. If we were only robots, God could easily have done that.
11. The sacrificial system of the times of the Old Testament was developed by God as a concrete way of teaching people including very primitive people that God can remove our sins and transform our lives if we cooperate. Its primary purpose was to teach the people how deadly sin is. Is it really possible to make a lamb guilty of our sins? Can sin somehow be carried in, or by, blood? That whole process was intended to teach several important lessons: 1) God should be the center of our lives, just as the tabernacle was at the center of the Israelite encampment; 2) Everything connected with God and the worship of God is holy, clean, and pure—separate from sin; 3) Our only hope of salvation is in going to God and asking for His help in making the necessary changes in our lives; 4) While we may not understand all that is involved—and the Israelites obviously did not—God will take care of things if we do our part by taking the time and making the effort to get God into the center of our lives; 5) Sin leads to death; 6) If we do not want to die of sin, we need to accept God's plan of salvation; and 7) When we recognize the cost and seriousness of sin, we will ask for God's help in ridding our lives of this deadly taint. Those lessons should have been learned by the Israelites from Moses.
12. God's gracious forgiveness was never intended to eliminate or wipe out our past record of sins just so that we can go out and do them all over again! (1 Peter 1:15-16)
13. Read 1 Peter 3:11. Notice that the whole purpose of the plan of salvation is to lead us to live holy and godly lives, not just to forgive our sins without changing us!
14. Read 1 Peter 1:15-17,22; 2:1; 3:8-9; 4:7-11; and 2 Peter 3:11. How do these verses relate to the idea of substitution? It is clear that we need to live holy, (Leviticus 11:44; 19:2; 1 Peter 1:15-16) obedient, and loving lives if we are to see God just as Jesus said. (Matthew 5:8) What was Peter trying to teach us about the relationship between God's judgment and our

Christian behavior? First Peter 1:17 and 2 Peter 3:11 make it clear that we will be judged according to our actions. Notice that we are judged savable by God, not only because we are justified or forgiven but also because our actions are actually changed.

15. Peter made it clear that he expected his readers to live holy lives. *To be holy* means to be set aside for a special purpose. For example, we might be set aside to live godly lives. (Exodus 26:34; 28:36; 29:6,37) The Sabbath was set apart by God for holy purposes. (Genesis 2:3) That process of being set aside for holy purposes is called *sanctification*.
16. Peter made it very clear that in order to live godly and holy lives, we must rid ourselves of malice, guile, insincerity, envy, and slander. (1 Peter 2:1) Furthermore, Christians should live in unity of spirit, loving other church members and being humble. (1 Peter 3:8-9) In his ladder, Peter taught that Christians should also have goodness, godliness, and love. (2 Peter 1:5-7) Finally, we are to cast our anxiety upon Jesus. (1 Peter 5:7) Our goal is to be Christ-like. The only way to accomplish that is to be constantly focused on His life so that the Holy Spirit can transform us to become more like Him. Does that process end on this earth? Or, will we continue to grow more and more like God throughout eternity?
17. What did Peter say about the second coming of Jesus? Read 1 Peter 1:4,17; 4:5-6,17; 2 Peter 3:1-10. Peter assured his readers that God has great blessings stored in heaven for their benefit. If they come to feel comfortable in calling God their Father, they will learn to live as God lives, following His instructions. Peter reminded them—and us—that God will judge everyone; therefore, we must get prepared. And then, he spelled out what will happen to the wicked. However, Peter recognized that this message would not be received readily by all. Skeptics and scoffers will deny God's existence and His ability to intervene in the events on this earth. But, ultimately, evil will be totally destroyed.
18. Read 1 Peter 1:4. Peter recognized that some—perhaps many—of his initial readers would suffer one or more kinds of discrimination or even persecution. But, he reminded them that Jesus has proven that even death in this world is not the end. In other words, even if one is killed, his future reward awaits and is an eternal life with God in heaven.
19. Peter wrote several times about the judgment and how it might impact us. (See 1 Peter 1:17; 4:5-6,17. Compare Ezekiel 9.) And then, he went on to say that the wicked and the godless will be destroyed in a world-wide firestorm. (2 Peter 3:7)
20. Peter recognized that all Christians who are serious about their religion are hoping that the second coming of Jesus will be soon. But, he recognized that delays may and will come. (2 Peter 3:1-10) The reason for these delays is clearly not because God's plan has failed. Instead, the reason for the delay is because He is waiting for as many as possible to be saved. The only other option for those currently not ready is eternal destruction. But, if new babies are constantly being born, won't there always be more people to be saved?
21. Read 1 Peter 2:11-21 and 5:1-5. Peter recognized that there must be order in society and in the church. He challenged his readers to respect all forms of authority since they are genuinely in charge. (Compare Romans 13:1-7.) We must serve and be obedient to those in charge; that will demonstrate clearly that we want to be good people and good citizens. We must be humble and serve one another if we are to be rewarded ultimately.
22. We recognize that there have been times down through history when certain governments have been truly evil. However, it is generally true that good governments serve the purposes of God by preserving law and order and safety in society.
23. Do you think that Peter would agree with Paul in suggesting that good order is needed within

the church as well? Do our church leaders recognize the real needs of their congregations? Are they being the humble, servant-leaders for which God calls? None of us has anything of which we can boast. Any good that abides in us came from God. So, we should always be humble as we stand and serve among God's other children.

24. Repeatedly, Peter mentioned the absolute primacy of Bible study for our instruction. Read 1 Peter 1:10-12; 2 Peter 1:16-20; 3:2,16. In these remarkable verses, we are reminded that the ancient prophets wrote largely for our benefit. They wrote things that even the angels want to understand better. These ideas were not made up by human beings; instead, God spoke through the Holy Spirit to His prophets. In order to best understand these messages, we need to study them together with our friends and fellow believers. Peter went on to suggest that the writings of the holy prophets of the Old Testament were then being joined by messages from the apostles—which would form the New Testament. However, Peter recognized that while people like Paul wrote serious and challenging messages, there will always be people who want to twist and misconstrue them to their own destruction. But, we need to recognize that those words, if understood correctly, are the words of God.
25. Where would we be without the teachings of the Old Testament and the New Testament? We are especially indebted to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John for what they reveal about the life and death of Jesus Christ—God.
26. We need to recognize that our only hope of salvation is an understanding of the Word of God as presented in Scripture. We must read it prayerfully and carefully in the context of the local passage or chapter, the larger context of the book itself, and then the entire Bible itself including its basic theme of the great controversy over God's character and government. We need to ask ourselves what it was that the Bible writer was trying to say to his historical readers. What kinds of circumstances were affecting their lives? Then, we need to ask ourselves how those lessons from long ago can apply to our own lives today. What is it that God wants to teach us? Are we willing to surrender our pet theories to the truths as presented in the Bible with the aid of the Spirit of Prophecy?
27. So, we see that Peter recognized that those who will be saved in the kingdom need to learn of Jesus through the Scriptures and learn to live holy and godly lives. We need not only to know the truth but also to live it. Obedience, purity of heart, and love—especially for our fellow believers—are required if we want to live in the kingdom of God. Imagine how it would impact the church if each member were honestly and faithfully pursuing that goal.
28. In speaking to the General Conference Session in April, 1891, Ellen White said:

Brethren, will you carry the spirit of Christ with you as you return to your homes and churches? Will you put away unbelief and criticism? We are coming to a time when, more than ever before, we shall need to press together, to labor unitedly. In union there is strength. In discord and disunion there is only weakness.—Ellen G. White, *General Conference Daily Bulletin*,* April 13, 1891, par. 27; *Selected Messages*,* book 2, 373.4-374.0.
29. Second Peter 3:12 contains one of the challenging ideas which has stirred a lot of controversy down through the ages. If God knows the end from the beginning, doesn't He already know when everything will happen? If so, then how can we possibly hasten the coming of the day of God? The Bible and Ellen White spoke repeatedly about the delay. If there is a delay, there must also be the possibility of hastening the Lord's coming. If we stop delaying the second coming, would we not be hastening it? We need to wake up and welcome the Bridegroom. (Matthew 25:1-13)

30. Serious Christians believe that nature is God's second book. Unfortunately, we know that modern-day skeptics, evolutionists, and some scientists have interpreted things they see and understand from nature in ways to do their best to eliminate God from the picture. Is it clear that the writings of the Bible clearly and simply apply to our understanding of nature? If properly understood, God's two Books are in full agreement. But, that agreement can get essentially destroyed when one book is set aside while trying to understand the other. Christians should never allow that to happen. We need to recognize that for evolutionists and atheists, their beliefs are their religion. They want us to believe that they have science and that we have religion; but, we should never yield that point or allow them to convince us of that position. They have their religion, and we have our religion; those two need to be compared. They have their scientific facts, and those are the same scientific facts that we have; the differences are in the interpretation of those facts.
31. So, what have you learned from our study of 1 and 2 Peter? How does your understanding of the theological issues as presented in these two letters compare with your understanding of theology from the rest of the New Testament and the entire Bible? Peter warned us very bluntly to be aware of deceptions that will come especially in the last days. When reading 1 & 2 Peter together, we recognize the centrality of Jesus Christ. Martin Luther was ready to say that about 1 Peter; but, he did not think that about 2 Peter. Why do you think that was?
32. Does reading 1 & 2 Peter give you hope? Or, fear? Peter reminded us that God has a long-term, in fact, eternal plan for every one of His children. We are the only ones that can by exercising our freedom disqualify ourselves from being a part of that plan. In light of God's future judgment, we are all called to live holy and godly lives.
33. Read 2 Peter 1:2-4, 12-15 once again. Is there anything necessary for our faith and our salvation that God has not provided? Is it really possible for us to participate in the divine nature? How is that possible? God's method of preparing us for salvation is by having a knowledge of the life and death of Jesus Christ and all that it implies about God's character and government. Day by day, we are to grow in our knowledge of Jesus Christ. In light of these facts, Peter did his best to make it possible for us to know, trust in, and have faith based on the story of Jesus. Remember that the Gospel of Mark is really Peter's Gospel. (Compare 1 Peter 5:13 and 2 Peter 1:15.)
34. Read 1 Peter 1:18-19; 2:22-25; and 3:18. Peter talked about our redemption, a "price that was paid" for our salvation. What does that mean? Is someone demanding that a price be paid? If so, what was the price? To whom was it paid? How was it paid? Was it the Father who demanded that a price be paid before He would agree to save mankind? (See John 3:16.) Was the price paid to Satan to somehow buy us back?
35. God needed to demonstrate once and for all eternity the serious, in fact, deadly consequences of sin because it separates us from the only Source of life. Jesus died not only the first death by giving up His human life on the cross, but also He died that terrible second death that results from separation from God. (Matthew 27:46) That death is the one that the wicked will die in the end. (See *Desire of Ages* 753.1-3; *1T* 124.1; *2T* 210.1; *Mar* 271.3.) We need to see and understand how serious that death is so we can avoid it at all costs.
36. Was it really necessary for Jesus to come and live and die in order for us to be saved? Did it need to be Jesus Himself? Or, could an angel have done the job?
37. The questions that had been raised by Lucifer/Satan were about God and how He governs.

The questions were not about angels or human beings; they were about God. So, only God could answer those questions. And it was not enough just to make a statement about His character and His government; the truth had to be demonstrated absolutely convincingly so that it could not be questioned again for the rest of eternity. The life and death of Jesus Christ, Himself God in the flesh, did just that. Only One who was God and, thus, had the power of life and death within Himself could say:

“No one takes my life away from me. I give it up of my own free will. I have the right to give it up, and I have the right to take it back. This is what my Father has commanded me to do.”—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation** (2nd edition, John 10:18). New York: American Bible Society.

38. Jesus could die and by exercising His divine power come back to life when His Father called Him. (DA 785.2) No one else, and that includes Satan, could do that.
39. Peter spoke extensively about what our response should be to all that God has done. Read 1 Peter 1:13-17; 2:1-2, 11-12; 3:8-9; 4:7-11; and 2 Peter 3:11, 14. In light of all that God has said through the prophets and apostles and done in the life and death of Jesus Christ, we should be delighted to have the privilege of living holy and righteous lives according to God's directions.
40. How would you describe the hope of our salvation? Read 1 Peter 1:3-9, 13; 5:4; and 2 Peter 3:3-14. There is no doubt that the rewards that await those who believe and trust in God are “out of this world!” Our hope for an eternal inheritance will never perish. God is choosing to wait until every person who will choose to be on His side is prepared for the cataclysm that is coming. He is waiting for us to become serious about the necessary preparation. God knows and He tells us that the world as we know it with its surrounding heavens—our atmosphere—will disappear in a roaring inferno that will destroy this sinful blot in God's universe.
41. So, what is delaying that day? Read Matthew 24:14. Are we doing our job? Are our churches orderly and well-organized to finish the gospel in their areas? Do the members take Scripture really seriously? Or, do we allow new ideas and new theories to arise that challenge some ideas from Scripture? For more information, see the handout: “What Is the Reason for the Delay [of the Second Coming of Jesus]?” on www.Theox.org as filed under Teacher's Guides, then the subsection General Topics.
42. Peter clearly mixed theological instruction with practical admonition. Do we understand the relationship between those two factors?
43. Could you summarize in your own mind what we have learned from 1 & 2 Peter? Could you explain it to someone else? What role does Scripture play in your personal, spiritual life? Do you love to study the life and death of Jesus more than you love watching television or a movie? Do you look forward to the final events in this world's history with fear? Or, with longing? Could we fear the last plagues and still look forward to the second coming?
44. Theological instruction is given for a reason. It is intended to lead to a change in our behavior. Has that worked for you during these three months of studying 1 & 2 Peter?

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