

2 Peter 1:12-21 ~ Prophecy of Scripture ~ Discussion Questions

1. If you knew you were about to die and had time to make only one phone call or write one letter or e-mail, whom would you contact? Why?
2. In what did Peter say his readers were established? Are you established in this?
3. What did Peter think it was right for him to do? Why do we need to have our memory refreshed about Biblical truths? Why do we forget these truths? Did other Biblical authors also feel this was important? (1:13, Romans 15:15, Philippians 3:1, 1 John 2:21)
4. What did Peter know would happen to him soon and what did he want his readers to do then? (1:14-15)

Now that the salutation and *exordium* (theme of the letter) have been presented, Peter moves on to the *probatio* (presentation of the case), which is in three parts: 1) proof that the message that Jesus will return is trustworthy (1:16-21), 2) defense of the teaching that Jesus will come to judge (chap 2), and 3) a further reminder to his readers to remember the coming day of the Lord and final judgement (chap 3).

5. What gave Peter strong credibility? (1:16)
6. How important is it to your faith that Peter (and other New Testament writers) were eyewitnesses to the life of Christ?
7. In 1:19, Peter speaks of the “word of the prophets being made more certain” by the transfiguration. How many prophecies of future events are there in total in the Bible? How many have already been fulfilled and how many are in the future?
8. From where do Biblical prophecies come? Who is qualified to interpret them? (1:20-21, 2 Timothy 3:16, Revelation 22:16, 2 Samuel 23:2, Acts 1:16)
9. In 1:19, what did Peter tell his readers (and us!) that they should do?
10. We often think of “prophecy” as foretelling the future, but it is much more than that. What exactly is it?
11. How do you need to change your Bible study habits in light of the importance of Scripture?

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1. I you knew you were about to die and had time to make only one phone call or write one letter or e-mail, whom would you contact? Why?

2. In what did Peter say his readers were established? Are you established in this?

In Verse 1:12, Peter said his readers are firmly established in the truth. The truth of what? The basic truth of salvation as summarized in John 3:16 – “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” There are several ways of expressing this basic truth; another is the four spiritual laws:

1. God loves you and offers a wonderful plan for your life.
2. Man is sinful and separated from God.
3. Jesus Christ is God’s only provision for overcoming man’s sin.
4. We must individually receive Jesus Christ through faith as our Savior and Lord. When we do so, we will experience a new spiritual birth.

3. What did Peter think it was right for him to do? Why do we need to have our memory refreshed about Biblical truths? Why do we forget these truths? Did other Biblical authors also feel this was important? (1:13, Romans 15:15, Philippians 3:1, 1 John 2:21)

Peter thought it was right for him to refresh the memories of his readers as to the fundamental truths about our salvation and relationship with God. Nothing you’ve learned about mathematics, science, language, cooking, engineering, space exploration, philosophy, weapons, clothing or anything else matters even the tiniest fraction as much as your relationship with God.

Why do we forget this so often or put it on the back burner out of sight? Perhaps it just doesn’t seem here and now. It’s in the future. It doesn’t put dinner on the table or wheels under your feet. It doesn’t cry or whine or scream at you. It’s something to take care of Sundays or maybe just a couple of times a year, not every day. It’s easy to forget God’s love for us. Peter knew this and felt that he just had to remind his readers again. He wasn’t the only one; Paul and John did too.

Romans 15:15 – I have written you quite boldly on some points, as if to remind you of them again, because of the grace God gave me.

Philippians 3:1 – Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you.

1 John 2:21 – I do not write to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it and because no lie comes from the truth.

4. What did Peter know would happen to him soon and what did he want his readers to do then? (1:14-15)

Peter knew he was going to die soon and reiterated in 1:15 that he would do all he could before he died to see that his readers remembered these important truths. The NLT clarifies these verses: ¹⁴ For our Lord Jesus Christ has shown me that I must soon leave this earthly life, ¹⁵ so I will work hard to make sure you always remember these things after I am gone. Whether Peter influenced it or not, the gospel of Mark, the earliest one, was based largely on sermons and stories of Peter plus some of Paul, both of whom spent time with Mark.

Now that the salutation and *exoredium* (theme of the letter) have been presented, Peter moves on to the *probatio* (presentation of the case), which is in three parts: 1) proof that the message that Jesus will return is trustworthy (1:16-21), 2) defense of the teaching that Jesus will come to judge (chap 2), and 3) a further reminder to his readers to remember the coming day of the Lord and final judgement (chap 3).

5. What gave Peter strong credibility? (1:16-18)

Peter's message was based on his own personal eyewitness account of the supernatural events that marked the life of Jesus. Moreover, he heard the actual voice of God. Seeing and hearing. It was not made up of myths and imaginative stories of people motivated by greed and personal gain, as we'll meet later (2:3).

In Christ's transfiguration the disciples got a foretaste of what the second coming will be like when Jesus returns to establish his eternal kingdom ("eyewitnesses of his majesty"), an event that gave emphasis, credibility, and relevance to Peter's words.

Peter being an eyewitness to the transfiguration was relevant *in general* because it demonstrates that the Christian message is about real events, not myths. It is relevant *in particular* because it demonstrates that God can and does break into the flow of the world (3:4-7) and it showed beyond a doubt that Jesus was God's majestic Son. The fact that this happened on "the sacred mountain" points to Psalm 2:6-7 – ⁶ For the Lord declares, "I have placed my chosen king on the throne in Jerusalem, on my holy mountain." ⁷ The king proclaims the Lord's decree: "The Lord said to me, 'You are my son.

This psalm goes on to speak about the Son's role in judgement, which Peter enlarges on in Chapter 3. The connection of the transfiguration to Jesus' coming in judgement is also made in the Synoptic Gospels, especially Mark 8:38 –9:8.

So back to the original question: Peter's credibility came from his personal account of seeing Jesus transfigured, hearing God's voice, and relating these events to familiar scripture from the Old Testament, which he expands upon in the next paragraph (1:19-21).

6. How important is it to your faith that Peter (and other New Testament writers) were eyewitnesses to the life of Christ?

7. In 1:19, Peter speaks of the “word of the prophets being made more certain” by the transfiguration. How many prophecies of future events are there in total in the Bible? How many have already been fulfilled and how many are in the future?

Because of that experience, Peter says he now has even greater confidence in the message proclaimed by the prophets. This is yet another prophecy come true.

How many prophecies of future events are there and how many have been fulfilled? Tough questions. Perhaps the most comprehensive book on the subject is *Every Prophecy of the Bible* by John F. Walvoord, Cook Communications, 1990. Ex-Chancellor of Dallas Theological Seminary and on the faculty for 50 years, Dr. Walvoord lists and discusses 1,000 prophecies of which he says “one-half (500) have been literally fulfilled, establishing beyond any doubt that the Bible is intended to be interpreted literally in prophetic passages. Unmistakably, the evidence is overwhelming that God means exactly what he says... When history has run its course, every prophecy will be fulfilled.” Strong words, but the 685-page book certainly makes a strong case to believe them. Nearly all 58 Messianic prophecies and 130 ones about Jesus have been fulfilled with the exception of those related to the second coming and final judgement.

There are only three books in the Bible with no prophecies: Ruth, Song of Solomon, and Philemon; all 63 of the other books have one or more. Those with the most prophecies are Isaiah (191), Jeremiah (170), and Matthew (156). By subject, the most prophecies are about Jesus and the Messiah, Israel and its enemies, David and the Davidic Covenant, God, Babylon, and the end times.

8. From where do Biblical prophecies come? Who is qualified to interpret them? (1:20-21, 2 Timothy 3:16, Revelation 22:16, 2 Samuel 23:2, Acts 1:16)

All of the prophecies in the Bible come from God. They don't come from the imagination of men. In many cases the prophetic event appears in dream, but this is a dream provided by God. We've all had vivid and perhaps bizarre or weird dreams, but are they prophetic? Probably not; if they were God would let you know in no uncertain terms. Several cults have come out of such dreams, but they have nothing to do with our Lord God.

2 Timothy 3:16 – All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. [NLT]

Revelation 22:16 – “I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this message for the churches. I am both the source of David and the heir to his throne. I am the bright morning star.”

2 Samuel 23:2 – “The Spirit of the Lord speaks through me; his words are upon my tongue.

Acts 1:16 – “Brothers,” he said, “the Scriptures had to be fulfilled concerning Judas, who guided those who arrested Jesus. This was predicted long ago by the Holy Spirit, speaking through King David.

Who is qualified to interpret prophecy? Peter says in 1:20-21 that neither the prophecy or the interpretation of it came from the prophet or man. The NLT says “No, those prophets were moved by the Holy Spirit, and they spoke from God.” There seem to be two views of this verse: 1) no prophecy is to be privately or independently interpreted. The Holy Spirit, Scripture itself, and the church should be included in the interpretation process. Or 2) no prophecy originated through the prophet’s own interpretation or through a human interpretation of it. God is the origin of prophecy and the Holy Spirit will help interpret it.

9. In 1:19, what did Peter tell his readers (and us!) that they should do?

He said we should pay attention to the words of the prophets because prophecy is like a light shining in a dark place. He also desires our continued study of Scripture as the safeguard against errors of the false teachers in chapter 2.

The Greek word for “to pay attention” was *prosecho* meaning to hold the mind or the ear toward something and so to pay attention.

In non-biblical writings the primary meaning of *prosecho* was to “have in close proximity to” especially referring to mental processes as in the saying ‘turn one’s mind to.’ Such a person would be in a state of alert.

Prosecho was also a nautical term meaning to hold a ship in a direction, to sail towards. Thus Peter is saying in a sense to hold your course toward your final destination. To keep holding your mind like a lamp in a dark stormy night on the glimmer of the distant lighthouse which keeps the ship on course so that it doesn't crash. Peter was warning believers that since they would be exposed to false teachers, they must pay careful attention to Scripture.

In today’s experience oriented society many people, including Christians, seek to determine truth by the way God has worked in their own lives. But for Peter the splendor of his experience of the transfiguration actually faded as he spoke of the surety of the written revelation of the prophets. It is an amazing assessment of the validity of holy Scripture that Peter declares it to be more dependable than a voice from heaven heard with the natural ear.

10. We often think of “prophecy” as foretelling the future, but it is much more than that. What exactly is it?

The word “prophecy” comes from the Greek word *prophteia* which has the literal meaning of speaking forth, with *no* connotation of prediction or other supernatural or mystical significance. Bill Mounce of BiblicalTraining.org writes that a prophecy can be a prediction about the future, but in the majority of its uses it refers to authoritative speech that has its origin with God. Joseph Henry Thayer of the American Bible Revision Committee (1870-90) defines it as “discourse emanating from divine inspiration and declaring the purposes of God, whether by reproving and admonishing the wicked, or comforting the afflicted, or revealing things hidden; especially by foretelling future events.” W.E. Vine writes that “Though much of OT prophecy was purely predictive, prophecy is not necessarily,

nor even primarily, fore-telling. It is the declaration of that which cannot be known by natural means; it is the forth-telling of the will of God, whether with reference to the past, the present, or the future.”

So the gift of prophecy is actually the gift of preaching, of proclaiming the Word of God. God used many Old and New Testament prophets to foretell future events, but that was never an indispensable part of prophetic ministry. Paul gives perhaps the best definition of the prophetic gift stating that “one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation.” (1Co14:3). And in 1 Peter 4:11, he states “Whoever speaks, let him speak, as it were, the utterances of God.”

A prophet of God, therefore, is simply one who speaks forth God’s word, and prophecy is the proclaiming of that word. The gift of prophecy is the Spirit-given and Spirit-empowered ability to proclaim the word effectively.

Back to 2 Peter 1:21. Peter indicates that all prophecy came by the Spirit. When the prophets spoke, God spoke by his Spirit. They were moved by the Holy Spirit. It was not their own will, but God’s initiative which produced their inspired testimony. They were born along by God’s Spirit much like a ship is driven by wind and weather. They were not in ultimate control, but were vessels which God moved according to his purpose.

John Piper summarizes, “Yes, men spoke. They spoke with their own language and style. But Peter mentions two other dimensions of their speaking. First, they spoke from God. What they have to say is not merely from their own limited perspective. They are not the origin of the truth they speak; they are the channel. The truth is God’s truth. Their meaning is God’s meaning. Second, not only is what they spoke from God, but how they spoke it is controlled by the Holy Spirit. God did not simply reveal truth to the writers of Scripture and then depart in hopes that they might communicate it accurately. Peter says that in the very communicating of it they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. The making of the Bible was not left to merely human skills of communication; the Holy Spirit himself carried the process to completion.”

[Above notes on Q 10 from www.preceptaustin.org]

11. How do you need to change your Bible study habits in light of the importance of Scripture?