

# INTRODUCTION TO 2 PETER

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Second Peter is a wonderful composition, and we are blessed to have it. In order to examine every word and every concept here, we must be prepared to dive deep. Joseph Smith once said, “I love men who dive deep,” and he apparently loved this text too—he gave several lectures on it. More holiness is what this letter would like us to strive for in every way, step-by-step, in ways that are truly impressive, profound, and mind- and soul- changing. Peter encouraged the believers to make their calling and election sure. He testified that prophecy comes by the power of the Holy Ghost. This epistle may be examined through several lenses, all of which are mutually reinforcing.

First, in composition and content it meets almost all of the criteria for an ancient farewell speech. Exemplifying this literary form quite remarkably and interestingly, 2 Peter adds depth to our understanding of Peter and his priorities. The content is tightly packed with spiritual fervor and intense passion. Peter believed this to be his last opportunity to stir up his people so that after he was killed they would “have these things always in remembrance” (2 Peter 1:13, 15).

Second, the epistle may be examined from the position of Peter’s background and experiences, doctrinal knowledge, spiritual dedication, and his personal relationship with the Savior. He desires that his readers will learn and apply these truths in order to “be partakers of the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4) and to make their calling and election sure through faith and effort.<sup>1</sup>

Third, one can detect many words in this farewell missive that are closely related to words in the epistle of Jude. Whether Peter is drawing upon Jude, or Jude is echoing 2 Peter is not absolutely certain, but various evidences lean in the direction of Peter having used Jude. This means that readers might want to read Jude before reading 2 Peter to become aware of what Jude, who was Peter’s fellow Apostle, had previously written because it was then was repurposed by Peter.

Fourth, one can see this epistle, especially the first chapter, through the eyes of Joseph Smith. Joseph Smith said that “Peter penned the most sublime language of any of the apostles.”<sup>2</sup> *Sublime* means “lofty, grand, or exalted in thought, expression, or manner,” and “of outstanding spiritual, intellectual, or moral worth.”<sup>3</sup> These definitions befit any part of this epistle. “They fit not only the language of Peter, but also the doctrine he teaches.”<sup>4</sup>

Fifth, we can examine the commonality between Peter’s teaching and Latter-day doctrine, leading to the conclusion that the major divine doctrines have been the same, with minor accommodations for the era, throughout God’s dealings with humankind.

Second Peter can be outlined as follows:

- 1:1–4 Written to those who are prepared to advance
- 1:5–9 Eight steps in increasing personal righteousness
- 1:10–11 The goal of knowing with assurance
- 1:12–15 Peter testifies, even as he prepares to die
- 1:16–21 Knowledge was and is revealed by the voice of God
- 2:1–3 False teachers will intrude among you
- 2:3–9 God willingly delays their punishment
- 2:10–22 The telltale sins and doom of false teachers
- 3:1–2 Be mindful of the commandments
- 3:3–8 God willingly delays his Second Coming
- 3:10–13 Prepare for the coming Day of the Lord
- 3:14–16 Be patient and understanding
- 3:17–18 Be on guard and grow in testimony
- 3:18 Praises to the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ

## Notes

1 Andrew C. Skinner, “Peter—the Chief Apostle,” in *Go Ye into All the World: Messages of the New Testament Apostles: The 31st Annual Sidney B. Sperry Symposium* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book; Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2002), 187–219.

2 “Discourse, 17 May 1843–A, as Reported by William Clayton,” p. 16, The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-17-may-1843-a-as-reported-by-william-clayton/1>.

3 *Merriam-Webster*, s.v., “sublime (*adj.*),” <https://merriam-webster.com/dictionary/sublime>.

4 Monte S. Nyman, “The Sublime Epistle of Peter,” in *Studies in Scripture*, vol. 6, *Acts to Revelation*, ed. Robert L. Millet (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1987), 226.

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