

PETER, THE CHIEF APOSTLE

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Of all the personages in the New Testament, none is more important to the Latter-day Saints, save Jesus only, than Peter—Simon bar Jona by name. There is no question that the Church of Jesus Christ is founded upon the “chief corner stone,” Jesus Christ Himself (Ephesians 2:20). All that the Church *is* and *was* is rooted in the Master. But Peter was the “seer” and “stone” of the early Church, titles designated by the Savior according to the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible (JST, John 1:42).

Though the Apostle Paul is sometimes regarded by the world as the architect of Christianity,¹ and we ourselves look to him for doctrinal understanding, Peter was the chief Apostle in the meridian dispensation and held the position equivalent to that of the President of the Church of Jesus Christ in our day. Peter was a great prophet, seer, and revelator. He, along with James and John, who together constituted “the First Presidency of the Church in their day,”² received the keys of the kingdom from the Savior, Moses, Elijah, and others on the Mount of Transfiguration (see Matthew 17:1–13). In June 1829, Peter, James, and John returned to earth as immortal beings and conferred upon Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery the Melchizedek Priesthood and its keys and ordained them to be Apostles of the dispensation of the fulness of times (see D&C 27:12–13). Truly, Peter was a man for all seasons of the Lord’s kingdom. Our purpose is to look at his life and actions and their significance for us today.

PETER’S LIFE AT THE TIME OF HIS CALL

We do not know when Peter was born, only that he was an adult living in Capernaum at the time the scriptures first introduce him to us. John’s

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Gospel says that Bethsaida was “the city of Andrew and Peter” (John 1:44), meaning perhaps that this was the ancestral family home or that these brothers were born there. Peter was married, and we know that his mother-in-law was staying in his house at Capernaum at the time Jesus healed her of a fever (see Mark 1:29–31), though we do not know if she was a permanent occupant of Peter’s home.

Peter’s house itself has an interesting history of its own that tells something about Peter’s open and hospitable personality. Apparently, it was also the home of Peter’s brother, Andrew (see Mark 1:29). It seems to have become the headquarters of the Church in Galilee, where lots of people gathered, especially after Jesus was rejected for the first time in His hometown of Nazareth (see Luke 4:23–31), and Capernaum came to be known as His “own city” (Matthew 9:1). One scholar has opined that Jesus “probably chose it because his first converts, the fishermen Peter and Andrew, lived there.”³ Note the way Mark describes one of the many gatherings in Peter’s home after Jesus had been rejected in Nazareth:

And again he entered into Capernaum after some days; and it was noised that he was in the house.

And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door: and he preached the word unto them.

And they come unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four.

And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof where he was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay.

When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee. . . .

I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house.

And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all. (Mark 2:1–5, 11–12)

Archaeology supports this story in an interesting way. The drystone basalt walls of the excavated house which is purported to be, and almost certainly is, Peter’s domicile could have supported only a light roof and, when viewed on site by anyone familiar with the text, automatically conjures up the episode of the curing of the paralytic. Much evidence shows

that this house was singled out and venerated from the mid-first century after Christ. One specific room in the house complex bears plastered walls and a large number of graffiti scratched thereon, some mentioning Jesus as Lord and Christ. In the mid-first century, the house underwent a significant change in use, from normal family activity to a general gathering or meeting place, indicating that it became one of the first house-churches in the Holy Land.⁴ Additionally, the synoptic Gospels portray Peter's house as being near the Capernaum synagogue, and archaeological excavations reveal that it was indeed situated near both the ancient synagogue of the town, which was situated on a slight rise just north of the house *and* the shores of the Sea of Galilee, immediately south of the house. New Testament passages indicate that Peter was a fisherman with his brother and was an owner of fishing vessels on the Sea of Galilee.

That Peter was married is an important doctrinal statement, for marriage was a vital, even indispensable, institution both in first-century Judaism and among the leaders of the very Church the Lord Himself established while He was on the earth. From a comment in one of Paul's letters to the Corinthian Saints we learn that Peter carried out his ministry and pursued his apostolic travels with his wife at his side. Speaking for himself and his companion Barnabas, Paul asks rhetorically in his letter, "Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?" (1 Corinthians 9:5). Though the King James Version is a bit convoluted here, Paul is literally asking, "Don't we have the right to take a believing wife along with us, as do the other apostles and the Lord's brothers and Cephas [the Aramaic form of Peter]?"⁵

It seems significant that Paul gives Peter's name separate mention, apart from the "other apostles" whom he cites in a general way. Perhaps Peter's association with his wife was especially prominent, or perhaps Paul is recognizing Peter's preeminent status and example.

PETER'S CALL

Undoubtedly, Peter was foreordained in the grand council of our pre-mortal life to occupy the singular position he was called to fill by the very Savior who was also foreordained and whom Peter would come to love and value more than life itself. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught, "Every man who has a calling to minister to the inhabitants of the world was ordained to that very purpose in the Grand Council of heaven before this world was."⁶ The accounts of the four Gospels indicate that Peter became a

disciple of our Lord in the very early days of Jesus' ministry but that the call to service was administered in stages, and the full realization of the significance of that calling was understood in stages. Perhaps curious at first blush, his initial call was bound up with his name. But when fully understood, the episode becomes a powerful illustration of an eternal principle.

Peter's actual given name was probably the Hebrew or Aramaic *Shim'on*, anglicized as Simeon (see Acts 15:14), meaning "one that hears." More often than not he is called Simon or Simon Peter in the New Testament. It has been argued that the frequency of the name *Simon* and the rare use of *Simeon* indicates that *Simon* was an alternate original name, was in common use during Jesus' day, and hints at Peter's contact with Greek culture. Thus, he was not simply an Aramaic-speaking Jew unaffected by Hellenistic forces in Galilee but rather "a bilingual Jew who thereby had some providential preparation for later missionary preaching."⁷ Peter's father was Jonah. Hence, when Peter was addressed formally he was called, in Aramaic, Simon Bar Jona, "Simon son of Jonah." This is important information because it helps us to understand the significance of the first recorded encounter between the future Apostle and Jesus.

Again the next day after, John stood, and two of his disciples,
And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he said; Behold the Lamb
of God!

And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.

Then Jesus turned, and saw them following him, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master;) Where dwellest thou?

He saith unto them, Come and see. And they came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day; for it was about the tenth hour.

One of the two who heard John, and followed Jesus, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.

He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ.

And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon, the son of Jona, thou shalt be called Cephas, which is, by interpretation, a seer, or a stone. And they were fishermen. And they straightway left all, and followed Jesus. (JST, John 1:35-42)⁸

Here we learn several interesting things, not the least of which is the superior reading of the Joseph Smith Translation over the King James Version. However, note in particular that this first call to discipleship includes the promise of a new name for *Shim'on bar-Yonah*. This was not simply the offhanded bestowal of a convenient nickname as some have supposed. Rather, it was the application of a sacred and ancient principle, which is still administered in our own day. Whenever a new or higher level of commitment is made to the Lord and administered by the Lord or His servants, those disciples who agree to live on a higher plane or commit to a higher covenant receive a new name, just as the scriptures of the Restoration teach (see Mosiah 5:9–12; D&C 130:11).

In this case, the new name, Aramaic *Kepha'* (anglicized as Cephias), is the equivalent of the Greek *Petros*, or Peter, meaning “stone.” But Joseph Smith presents an expanded interpretation of the Savior’s intention by describing the meaning as “a seer or a stone,” thus implying that the new name is better understood as “seer stone.” Simon’s new name reflected something of his mature role as “seer stone” or revelatory anchor of God’s earthly kingdom. In other words, just as a seer stone is an instrument of revelation, the Savior was outlining the future role of the chief Apostle by saying, in effect, Peter would be the instrument through whom revelation for the Church would come. An example of this may be seen in Peter’s vision concerning Cornelius reported in Acts 10.

Also important to note is that Peter and John, the first of the specifically named disciples to be called, had been looking for the Messiah. Their commitment to Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ was not “out of the blue.” They had been led to search for the Messiah by a mentor. That mentor, as implied in a few New Testament passages, was none other than John the Baptist, whose testimony occupies a good portion of the prologue or first chapter of the Gospel of John the Revelator. In other words, Peter was a disciple of John the Baptist *before* he became a disciple of the Savior. And probably so had most of those disciples who later became the members of the first Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in the meridian dispensation. This is implied in a statement attributed to Peter himself. During one of the first meetings of the Church held after the Savior’s ascension, Peter explained to the congregation—about 120 in number—that another needed to be appointed to fill the vacancy in the Quorum of the Twelve left by Judas’s death: “Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the

baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection" (Acts 1:21–22).

As indicated above, Peter was called to the ministry in a *series* of episodes, each of which progressively impressed on his mind a fuller understanding of both the nature of the call, as well as the nature of the Being extending it, *and* the need for Peter to live in complete harmony with his new calling, which was to become his vocation. Sometime after Peter's initial call from the Savior, Luke's record indicates that Peter was back fishing in the Sea of Galilee when the Savior again bade Peter to follow Him.

And [Jesus] saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets.

And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship.

Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught.

And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net.

And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake.

And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink.

When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.

For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken:

And so was also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.

And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him. (Luke 5:2–11)

Though Peter had had previous encounters with the Savior, this time he was so impressed and overcome by the dramatic miracle Jesus performed (perhaps precisely in order to get Peter's attention) that Peter not only

recognized his own unworthiness in the face of such staggering power and towering righteousness but also forsook his fishing business with wholehearted commitment. Commensurate with Peter's commitment on this occasion, Jesus in turn promised Peter and the sons of Zebedee that thenceforth they would do far more than harvest a few fish to satisfy only temporal desires—they would now “catch men,” meaning they would have the ultimate power to perform a greater harvest of souls and bring them within the wide sweep of the gospel net. Hence, the object lesson of the increased catch of fish wrought by the Savior's power moments before would, at that instant, have conveyed a poignantly symbolic message, with the Savior saying, in effect, just as I increased the fish harvest manyfold, the greater miracle is the power I will now give to you to increase the soul harvest.

From this time onward, it appears that Peter and his associates fulfilled their commitment to Jesus and to the kingdom with total devotion. We do not see them returning to their old vocation of fishing until *after* the Savior's Crucifixion and Resurrection. During that period of transition the Apostles knew they were supposed to do something to lead the Church in the absence of their Master but seemed unsure of what exactly they were supposed to do because the Savior was not constantly and directly tutoring them anymore. (It will be remembered that this episode occasioned the Savior's renewed call yet again to Peter to feed His sheep as recorded in John 21.)

PETER'S APOSTOLIC ROLE

Thus, from the day of the Savior's call by the Sea of Galilee to the time Jesus was taken away from him, Peter followed the Savior, first as a full-time disciple, and then as a full-time Apostle, living with his Teacher, learning his Master's message and method of ministry, and performing delegated tasks. The Greek word for “disciple,” *mathētēs*, is the equivalent of the Hebrew *talmid* and means “learner,” or “pupil/student,” hence “disciple.” The rabbis taught that continual and intimate association with one's teacher was an integral part of the learning process. And so it was with the disciples of Jesus. However, unlike the disciples of the other great rabbis of intertestamental Judaism, who were encouraged to choose for themselves their own master or teacher, Peter and his associates who eventually became members of the Quorum of the Twelve were reminded that they had been chosen by the Master (see John 15:16).

Jesus chose the first members of the Quorum of the Twelve from among all the disciples by the same method by which we may be guided: personal revelation.

And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.

And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles;

Simon, (whom he also named Peter,) and Andrew his brother, James and John, Phillip and Bartholomew,

Matthew and Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon called Zelotes,

And Judas the brother of James, and Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor. (Luke 6:12–16)

Noteworthy in this passage, and also typical of others, is the mention of Peter's name first. Whenever the Quorum of the Twelve is discussed in the New Testament, Peter is *always* mentioned and is always the *first one* mentioned or named. In fact, Peter is often singled out even when the rest of the group is noted only in a general way. A few examples will suffice:

“Simon and they that were with him followed after him” (Mark 1:36);

“Peter and they that were with him said, Master, the multitude throng thee and press thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?” (Luke 8:45);

“Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep” (Luke 9:32);

Even the angelic messenger in the sepulchre says to the women, “But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee” (Mark 16:7).

As these passages demonstrate, often Peter's name is given specifically, while the others “that were with him” remain anonymous. But that is not all. In the New Testament, Peter is usually found acting or speaking for the whole group of Apostles and disciples and is inferred to be the authorized spokesman for the group. For example:

At Caesarea Philippi, after a few comments had been proffered by various members of the Quorum as to what people were saying about Jesus' identity, Peter spoke out boldly, declaring his apostolic witness ultimately for the whole group, and affirmed Jesus' messiahship and divine sonship (see Matthew 16:13–16).

In Capernaum, after many had ceased from following the Savior owing to their offense at the Bread of Life discourse, Peter spoke for the entire

group of Apostles in affirming to Jesus their commitment to remain with Him because they were sure that He was Christ, the Son of the living God (see John 6:66–69).

In Perea, after their encounter with the rich young ruler who went away sorrowing over his inability to give up his possessions, Peter spoke on behalf of the whole group to remind the Savior that they had forsaken all and followed Him (see Matthew 19:27).

Many other examples of Peter's recognized leadership of the disciples generally, and his preeminent position in the Quorum of the Twelve specifically, could be marshaled. But more important than amassing examples of his preeminence is to understand why Peter was singled out and that such prominence was not based on favoritism but on Peter's role among the Apostles as the senior member of the Quorum. The principle of seniority in the Quorum of the Twelve is critically important in the Lord's Church—not to the men themselves but to the Lord because of the implications such seniority has for determining who the next President of the Church will be.

Peter was the senior Apostle on earth and as such held the keys of the kingdom. President Harold B. Lee taught that "Peter, holding the keys of the kingdom, was as much the president of the High Priesthood in his day as Joseph Smith and his successors, to whom also these 'keys' were given in our day, are the presidents of the High Priesthood and the earthly heads of the Church and kingdom of God on the earth."⁹ From Doctrine and Covenants 132:7 we learn that "there is never but one [man] on the earth at a time on whom this power and the keys of this priesthood are conferred." In other words, the keys of presidency over the whole Church "can be exercised in their fulness on the earth by only one man at a time; and that man in the period just after Jesus ascended into heaven was Peter."¹⁰

The man who holds the keys in their fulness at any one time on the earth is always the Lord's senior Apostle on earth. That is why seniority is so critical. Elder Russell M. Nelson provided an important insight into an episode from Peter's life which demonstrates the principle of seniority:

Seniority is honored among ordained Apostles—even when entering or leaving a room. President Benson related to us this account:

"Some [years] ago Elder Haight extended a special courtesy to President Romney while they were in the upper room in the temple. President Romney was lingering behind for some reason, and [Elder Haight] did not want to precede him out the door. When President

Romney signaled [for him] to go first, Elder Haight replied, ‘No President, you go first.’

“President Romney replied with his humor, ‘What’s the matter, David? Are you afraid I’m going to steal something?’”

Such deference from a junior to a senior Apostle is recorded in the New Testament. When Simon Peter and John the Beloved ran to investigate the report that the body of their crucified Lord had been taken from the sepulcher, John, being younger and swifter, arrived first, yet he did not enter. He deferred to the senior Apostle, who entered the sepulcher first. (See John 20:2–6.) Seniority in the Apostleship has long been a means by which the Lord selects His presiding high priest.¹¹

In this light, it seems significant that after His Resurrection, Jesus appeared to Peter singly and apart from all others (see Luke 24:34). And though Peter always maintained a reverent silence about the nature of the visitation, surely it had something to do with the fact that Peter was the President of the Church and held the keys in their fulness, and as such was the one being on earth commissioned to receive the mind and will of Deity in all matters.¹² In a sense, he was taking the place of Jesus as the head of the Church in mortality.

CAESAREA PHILIPPI AND THE PROMISE OF KEYS

Crucial for our understanding of Peter’s role as President of the Church and holder of the keys of the kingdom are two pivotal events occurring only a week apart—both of them associated powerfully with the principle of revelation. In the fall season of the year, some six months before His Crucifixion, the Savior took His disciples to the northern reaches of the Holy Land—a beautiful area at the foot of Mount Hermon called Caesarea Philippi. There Peter, acting as spokesman for the group, testified with certitude that Jesus was both Messiah and Son of the living God. In turn, the Savior then promised the chief Apostle that he would be given the keys of the kingdom of God on earth; that is, the power to direct and administer the use of the priesthood on the earth, the power to seal and unseal all matters relative to eternal life. But the manner in which the Savior instructed Peter and the group surely ranks as one of the great, almost unparalleled, teaching moments in all of scripture. For the Master Teacher used not only a wordplay on the name “Peter” but also employed the surrounding geography (the bedrock base of Mount Hermon) as a grand

visual aid to impress upon Peter and the others the fundamental principle underlying all that is done in the Lord's Church. Here are Jesus' words immediately following Peter's declaration of testimony:

And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. (Matthew 16:16-19)

Anyone who has stood at the bedrock base of Mount Hermon can almost picture the Savior riveting His gaze upon Peter and saying to the chief Apostle, "You are *Petros*" (meaning "stone" or "small rock" according to footnote Matthew 16:18a in the LDS edition of the King James Bible). Then, in the same breath, pointing to the bedrock face of the mountain-side near where they stood, Jesus declared, "And upon this *petra* [meaning "bedrock"] I will build my church."

Through this very graphic, natural visual aid, the Savior's instruction, and hence His wordplay, becomes clear to us. Though critical to the Lord's true Church, it wasn't the chief Apostle himself who formed the foundation of the Church or the basis that underlies all that the Church does. True enough, Peter was, metaphorically speaking, a seer stone; he was to be the revelator for the Church, the person through whom came the mind and will of the Lord for the members of the Church. But pointing out Peter's role simply serves to underscore the basic principle upon which the Church was founded. The Church, including leaders, members, ordinances, and activities, was built upon the foundation of *revelation*, more specifically the personal revelation that Jesus is the Messiah, the actual Son of God, and the ultimate head of the Church.

Revelation (particularly the revelation that Jesus is the Christ) is the immovable base upon which the Church is built and the foundation upon which every person's testimony must be established, Apostle and layperson alike. Revelation is the foundation upon which Joseph Smith's faith and

action were based. It is the principle underlying the First Vision. It is the principle which cannot be replaced by anything else. Possessed of his knowledge of Jesus' divine sonship and the revelatory experience by which that knowledge came, Peter could then serve as the vessel or instrument of revelation for the whole Church and the possessor and delegator of the keys and authority necessary to make Church ordinances and operations valid.

The Gospels of Matthew and Mark tell us that from this point on in His ministry the Savior began to teach His Apostles of His impending death and Resurrection. But Peter did not receive this idea warmly and attempted to rebuke the Savior, telling Him that death could not possibly be His lot (see Matthew 16:21–22). Likely Peter was still thinking of a Messiah in worldly terms—a political ruler and military conqueror on the order of King David or Solomon, who would restore Israel's grandeur and smash all enemies underfoot. Death at the hands of chief priests and scribes was not very messiahlike, let alone divine. Elder James E. Talmage says, "Peter saw mainly as men see, understanding but imperfectly the deeper purposes of God."¹³ Peter still did not understand the nature of the true Messiah, and his outburst was an appeal to vanity, an encouragement for Jesus to demonstrate the overwhelming power of the kind Peter thought the true Messiah should possess.

Peter's remonstrance evoked from Jesus a stern rebuke of his own. The Savior turned to the chief Apostle and uttered these famous words: "Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men" (Matthew 16:23). Of this Elder Talmage says:

In addressing Peter as "Satan," Jesus was obviously using a forceful figure of speech, and not a literal designation; for Satan is a distinct personage, Lucifer, that fallen, unembodied son of the morning; and certainly Peter was not he. In his remonstrance or "rebuke" addressed to Jesus, Peter was really counseling what Satan had before attempted to induce Christ to do, or tempting, as Satan himself had tempted. The command, "Get thee behind me, Satan," as directed to Peter, is rendered in English by some authorities "Get thee behind me, tempter." The essential meaning attached to both Hebrew and Greek originals for our word "Satan" is that of an adversary, or "one who places himself in another's way and thus opposes him." . . . The expression "Thou art an offense unto me" is admittedly a less literal

translation than “Thou art a stumbling-block unto me.” The man whom Jesus had addressed as Peter—“the rock,” was now likened to a stone in the path, over which the unwary might stumble.¹⁴

This is not the only instance of Peter being chastened by the Savior. There were others. But this episode provides a significant window of insight into Peter’s personality, for it allows us to reflect on one of the truly admirable, even remarkable, qualities of Peter. Whenever he was corrected by his Master, he listened without argument, accepted the chastening, never became embittered, and demonstrated the kind of meekness that the greatest mortals on this earth have shown, including the very men Peter respected most (both Moses and Jesus were described as the meekest of men). Meekness is not weakness; certainly Peter was not weak. Meekness is teachableness in the face of correction or even provocation.

Speaking to a group of young people years ago, Elder Neal A. Maxwell provided a much needed reminder about this virtue of meekness possessed by the chief Apostle. He said: “Meekness, however, is more than self-restraint; it is the presentation of self in a posture of kindness and gentleness, reflecting certitude, strength, serenity, and a healthy self-esteem and self-control. . . . President Brigham Young, who was tested in many ways and on many occasions, was once tried in a way that required him to ‘take it’—even from one he so much adored and admired. Brigham ‘took it’ because he was meek.”¹⁵ This not only describes Brigham Young but Simon Peter as well. He was chastened and he “took it” because it was administered by the perfect judge, and it was proper. However, a lesser man may not have reacted so well. In fact, was this Judas Iscariot’s very problem?

THE MOUNT OF TRANSFIGURATION

Almost one week after Peter’s historic declaration of testimony, the Savior’s promise of forthcoming keys was fulfilled when Peter, James, and John accompanied their Master to a high mountain where they were transfigured in order to endure the presence of heavenly beings (Moses, Elijah, John the Baptist,¹⁶ and probably others¹⁷). They heard the voice of God the Father bear witness of His Son in words reminiscent of Joseph Smith’s First Vision, and they were shaken by it. “Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well

pleased; hear ye him. And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid" (Matthew 17:4–6).

We note again Peter's role as spokesman for the three Apostles and his offer to build tabernacles, indicating that the Feast of Succoth or Tabernacles was at hand. Several happenings marked this experience of the Apostles, and it is clear from Peter's mature reflection about the event, recorded sometime afterward, that it affected him deeply. Elder Bruce R. McConkie indicates that Peter and the other two Apostles apparently received their own endowments while on the mountain¹⁸ and that Peter himself said something even more significant about his experience on the mount. From Peter's second epistle we read:

Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: . . .

For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.

We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts. (2 Peter 1:10, 16–19)

Elder McConkie seems to interpret Peter's language in light of Doctrine and Covenants 131:5, for he concludes that while Peter was on the Mount of Transfiguration he and his associates were sealed up to eternal life and this was made known to them by revelation. Doctrine and Covenants 131:5 states that "the more sure word of prophecy means a man's knowing that he is sealed up unto eternal life, by revelation and the spirit of prophecy, through the power of the Holy Priesthood." Thus Elder McConkie wrote:

Those members of the Church who devote themselves wholly to righteousness, living by every word that proceedeth forth from the mouth of God, make their *calling and election sure*. That is, they receive the more sure word of prophecy, which means that the Lord

seals their exaltation upon them while they are yet in this life. Peter summarized the course of righteousness which the saints must pursue to make their calling and election sure and then (referring to his experience on the Mount of Transfiguration with James and John) said that those three had received this more sure word of prophecy.¹⁹

The context of 2 Peter 1 lends some support to Elder McConkie's statement. Here Peter seems to be devoting an entire chapter to encouraging the Saints to make their "calling and election sure" (2 Peter 1:10) by discussing principles associated with this doctrine. This further leads Peter to discuss his own personal eyewitness experience of Christ's glory on the Mount of Transfiguration, which discussion he concludes by stating that he and the others with him received the more sure word of prophecy.

The Joseph Smith Translation of 2 Peter 1:19 provides another insight into Peter's thinking when it states, "We have therefore a more sure knowledge of the word of prophecy, to which word of prophecy ye do well that ye take heed." In other words, the heavenly voice gave the Apostles a more sure knowledge of the word of prophecy. They knew that the Old Testament prophecies were fulfilled regarding the Messiah; they had a surer sense of the accuracy of prophecies because they saw them actually fulfilled; they knew Jesus had the power to give eternal life.²⁰

However one chooses to view Peter's experience on the Mount of Transfiguration as described in his second epistle, it seems absolutely clear that by the time 2 Peter 1 was written the chief Apostle knew a great deal about the doctrine of being sealed up to eternal life, undoubtedly through personal experience.

Peter also witnessed several other happenings of import on the Mount of Transfiguration, including a vision of the transfiguration of the earth. That is, he and his fellow Apostles saw the earth renewed and receive again its paradisiacal condition at the Second Coming and beginning of Christ's millennial reign. The Prophet Joseph Smith wrote: "Nevertheless, he that endureth in faith and doeth my will, the same shall overcome, and shall receive an inheritance upon the earth when the day of transfiguration shall come; when the earth shall be transfigured, even according to the pattern which was shown unto mine apostles upon the mount; of which account the fulness ye have not yet received" (D&C 63:20–21).

Peter's experience on the Mount of Transfiguration was monumental by any standard and may well have been the most significant event for the Church between the start of Christ's mortal ministry and His atoning

sacrifice. It secured the keys of the kingdom to man on earth and taught the Lord's prophet about the reality of visions, heavenly beings, and the true relationship between Jesus and His Father, who is the true and living God.

WITNESS TO MIRACLES

It was Peter's special privilege to witness powerful miracles performed by Jesus, often in the company of few others. He was singled out, for instance, with James and John to see the Savior raise the daughter of Jairus from death back to life (see Mark 5:37–43). He was present on one occasion with the other disciples when the Savior fed five thousand with just a few morsels of food (see John 6:5–13, 68). He was in the boat when Jesus stilled the storm-tossed waves of the Sea of Galilee and then saw evil spirits cast out of someone of the Decapolis region (see Luke 8:22–33). He witnessed the Savior heal the blind, deaf, and crippled, and perform several other healings which demonstrated the Lord's compassion and power (see Luke 8:1; Mark 1:30–34). By the time the Lord's mortal ministry came to an end, the chief Apostle was no stranger to supernatural occurrences, for he was an eyewitness to marvelous manifestations of the powers of faith and priesthood. On one occasion, immediately following the feeding of the five thousand, Jesus sent the Apostles on ahead in a boat across the Sea of Galilee, while he went to "a mountain apart to pray" (Matthew 14:23) because the people wanted to "take him by force, to make him a king" (John 6:15). When night had fallen, and the wind on the sea became "boisterous," Jesus began walking on the water to go to the Apostles in their boat, sometime between 3:00 and 6:00 A.M., the time when fishermen on the Sea of Galilee are concluding their nightly fishing expeditions. The Apostles were naturally afraid, believing they were seeing a ghost. But Jesus identified Himself and encouraged His disciples to "be of good cheer" (Matthew 14:27). Certainly the Savior's power to perform mighty miracles was confirmed to Peter, and perhaps emboldened by a demonstration of that incomparable power, Peter requested of the Savior to bid him to come to Him. But once upon the water, and seeing the tumultuous wind and waves all around, Peter began to sink.

We glean from Peter's experience a significant lesson—one doubtlessly recounted many times in our New Testament classes: when Peter's focus was taken off the Savior and attracted to the surrounding conditions and great turbulence, he floundered. How like life for us! We must ever stay

focused on the Savior. But if we flounder, as did Peter, we too may be lifted up by the Savior's outstretched hand of help (see Matthew 14:28–31).

But also we learn from this experience, as did Peter, another lesson: that faith and fear are incompatible (see Matthew 14:31). How many times do we take counsel from our fears and ultimately forfeit a glorious reward we might have received if we had pressed forward in faith? Perhaps this is why Oliver Cowdery was not allowed to continue his initial efforts at translating the Book of Mormon—distractions and fears overcame his capacity to receive revelation (see D&C 9:5).

I believe Peter learned much about himself as well as the Savior on this occasion. But I also wonder if this episode didn't come back into sharp remembrance for Peter on a future occasion when he came across another person years later at the entrance to the Jerusalem temple who was struggling—only with a physical infirmity. Luke describes the episode with poignancy.

Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour.

And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple;

Who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple asked an alms.

And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us.

And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them.

Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.

And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. (Acts 3:1–7)

The parallel can hardly be missed. The chief Apostle took the floundering man at the temple by the hand and lifted him out of his distress just as Jesus had lifted Peter out of his distress years earlier on the Sea of Galilee. This shows us just how much Peter was destined to become like his Master when he became the earthly head of the Church.

THE LAST SUPPER

Peter's prominent role among the Twelve during the planning of and participation in the Last Supper is reported by the four Gospels. Mark and Matthew indicate that as Passover approached, the disciples asked about preparing for the feast (see Mark 14:1; Matthew 26:17). Knowing how Peter usually acted as the spokesman for the group, one wonders if he wasn't the one asking the question for the disciples. Luke says Jesus sent Peter and John to prepare the Passover, giving them specific instructions on when to make ready the feast and giving them a prophetic sign on how they would find the preappointed place. "And he said unto them, Behold, when ye are entered into the city, there shall a man meet you, bearing a pitcher of water; follow him into the house where he entereth in. And ye shall say unto the goodman of the house, The Master saith unto thee, Where is the guestchamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples? And he shall shew you a large upper room furnished: there make ready" (Luke 22:10-12).

This instruction is interesting for at least two reasons. A man bearing a pitcher of water was an unmistakable sign since it was such an unusual sight. Also, it is obvious that the man whose house was to be used for the Passover or Seder meal that evening was himself a disciple of the Savior. Jesus tells Peter and John that the owner would know they were making the request on behalf of the Savior when they invoked the phrase, "The Master saith unto thee . . ." The owner of the house would not understand who "the Master" was unless he was a disciple.

As the actual Passover supper unfolded in the Upper Room, several significant events occurred that directly involved Peter. Jesus revealed His knowledge of a betrayer, and Peter was the one who prompted John to ask of Jesus the identity of the betrayer (see John 13:24). During the course of the evening, two great ordinances were instituted that have had lasting impact. One was the transformation of the Passover meal into the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and the other was the washing of the feet. As Jesus prepared to wash His disciples' feet, Peter objected—perhaps believing that such a menial task was beneath the dignity of his Master. However, the Savior both reproved and instructed the chief Apostle, teaching him that he would someday come to a knowledge of the true significance of the ordinance and thus appreciate why it was performed the way it was (see John 13:6-11).

Of tremendous significance during the Upper Room experience were the

Savior's instruction to His Apostles about their ultimate reaction to the evening's proceedings—"All ye shall be offended because of me this night"—and Peter's response, even protest, that "though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended" (Matthew 26:31–33). Jesus' pointed and specific rejoinder to Peter teaches profound lessons, especially the confidence Jesus had in Peter's faithfulness and the potential He knew Peter possessed. "And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren" (Luke 22:31–32).

The thought that any prayer offered by the Savior would not come to pass nor that any prediction of His not be fulfilled is unthinkable. Peter's faith would not fail even though he had a deeper conversion yet to experience. The texts of all four Gospels indicate that even up to that point Peter still did not fully comprehend the earth-shaking events soon to overtake the Savior and the early Church. But again the Savior patiently tried to teach Peter of things that must come to pass. "Simon Peter said unto him, Lord, whither goest thou? Jesus answered him, Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards. Peter said unto him, Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake. Jesus answered him, Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice" (John 13:36–38). Peter was never one to shrink from danger, and we cannot doubt that at that moment and all the moments before and after that point Peter would have forfeited his life for his Master's.

PETER'S DENIAL

Of all the episodes associated with the life of Peter, perhaps the most famous and oft-repeated is his denial of the Lord when the latter was being arraigned before the high priest. The sequence leading up to this scene is important for helping us understand the nature of the denial. After the Last Supper concluded, events moved quickly as the Apostles followed Jesus to the Garden of Gethsemane. Again, Peter's prominent status was manifested as he and the sons of Zebedee, James and John, were given a special vantage point from which to witness the Savior's suffering—though fatigue and doubt ultimately prevented them from both receiving the blessings that could have been theirs and from providing the hand of support to their Master that He so desperately needed at that hour in the

garden (see JST, Mark 14:36–38). Three times the Savior came to reprove their murmurings and their weariness. However, in all fairness to the Apostles, we need to remember that they had been awake for a long time and had just gone through a long and emotionally draining Passover experience with the Savior.

When the Savior finished praying the same prayer for the third time in Gethsemane, the Jerusalem temple police force appeared on the scene ready to arrest Jesus. What happened next is stunning, to be sure, but completely in harmony with everything we know about the boldness, fearlessness, and death-defying willingness of Peter to defend his Master. John's Gospel tells the story best.

Then asked he them again, Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth.

Jesus answered, I have told you that I am he: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way:

That the saying might be fulfilled, which he spake, Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none.

Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus.

Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?

Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound him. (John 18:7–12)

It must be remembered that Peter's selfless act of protection was done in the face of an armed mob who could have easily overwhelmed the chief Apostle. And it should be noted that Jesus rebuked Peter for trying to stop the arrest. It should also be noted that with the retelling of this episode John highlights a theme woven throughout the evening's happenings: Jesus was extremely protective of His Apostles.

Jesus was taken to the palace of the high priest, where He first appeared before the former high priest, Annas (father-in-law of the current high priest), then arraigned before Caiaphas and others. All the Gospels report Peter's denial, suggesting to us that this was truly a pivotal event. The details need not detain us here, how Peter stood outside of the high priest's house on that cool night and denied knowing Jesus after interrogation by two women and a man (see Matthew 26:69–75; Mark 14:66–72; Luke

22:56–62; John 18:17–27). What gives us great pause, however, is consideration of Peter's motivation. Why did he deny knowing his Master? The reasons usually given range from fear of personal harm, to weakness, to embarrassment, to pride, to indecision or some other reason centering on a flaw or weakness in Peter's character.

However, this seems to contradict everything else we know and have read about Peter in the New Testament, including his confession of the Savior's sonship at Caesarea Philippi and his single-minded resolve not to allow anyone to harm the Savior, especially evil men. In every instance where the impending arrest or death of Jesus had come to Peter's attention, he had been both quick and forceful to say that he would not let such a thing happen (see Matthew 16:21–23) and he would protect Jesus at all costs, even at the peril of his own life, which is what we saw happen in Gethsemane when the armed forces of the chief priests could not intimidate a chief Apostle who was ready to battle them all (see John 18:7–12). Now we are to believe that in the face of a challenge initially put forward by a slave girl, the most unimportant person imaginable in Jewish society, Peter denied even knowing Jesus for fear of being exposed as a follower? (The word *damsel* used in the KJV does not convey the true, lowly position of Peter's first interrogator.)

Years ago, President Spencer W. Kimball invited us to reevaluate our understanding of Peter's actions in a magnificent article entitled "Peter, My Brother." Here another chief Apostle, writing about his model and mentor, asks crucial and penetrating questions: Do we really know Peter's mind and heart? Are we sure? Do we understand the circumstances of Peter's denial as well as we think we do? President Kimball discusses the tremendous strength, power, faithfulness, and apostolic attributes of Peter, including his boldness, and then says:

Much of the criticism of Simon Peter is centered in his denial of his acquaintance with the Master. This has been labeled "cowardice." Are we sure of his motive in that recorded denial? He had already given up his occupation and placed all worldly goods on the altar for the cause. . . .

Is it conceivable that the omniscient Lord would give all these powers and keys to one who was a failure or unworthy? . . .

If Peter was frightened in the court when he denied his association with the Lord, how brave he was hours earlier when he drew his sword against an overpowering enemy, the night mob. Later defying

the people and state and church officials, he boldly charged, “Him [the Christ] . . . ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.” (Acts 2:23.) To the astounded populace at the healing of the cripple at the Gate Beautiful, he exclaimed, “Ye men of Israel . . . the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate. . . . ye denied the Holy One. . . . And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses.” (Acts 3:12–15.)

Does this portrayal cowardice? Quite a bold assertion for a timid one. Remember that Peter never denied the divinity of Christ. He only denied his association or acquaintance with the Christ, which is quite a different matter. . . .

Is it possible that there might have been some other reason for Peter’s triple denial? Could he have felt that circumstances justified expediency? When he bore a strong testimony in Caesarea Philippi, he had been told that “they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ.” (Matthew 16:20.)²¹

To what then might we attribute Peter’s denial? Simply, to Jesus Himself—to the Savior’s request that Peter deny knowing the Savior, not deny the Savior’s divinity but deny knowing the Savior. Why? To ensure Peter’s safety as chief Apostle and to ensure the continuity and safety of the Quorum of the Twelve.

By the time of His arrest, Jesus had become very protective of His Apostles, and the safety of the Quorum had become a major concern for the Savior. In His great high priestly prayer, the Savior prayed for the safety of the Apostles. “I have given them thy word, and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil” (John 17:14–15). When He was arrested in the Garden, He said to the mob, “I have told you that I am he: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way” (John 18:8). Jesus did not want and could not let anything happen to those who were ordained to take over the earthly leadership of the Church. Jesus had told Peter at the Last Supper that He had prayed that Peter’s faith would not fail—and it did not. As President Kimball stated: “Peter was under fire; all the hosts of hell were against him. The die had been cast for the Savior’s crucifixion. If Satan could destroy Simon now, what a victory he would score. Here was the greatest of all living men. Lucifer wanted to confuse him, frustrate him,

limit his prestige, and totally destroy him. However, this was not to be, for he was chosen and ordained to a high purpose in heaven, as was Abraham."²²

In sum, it is apparent that Jesus knew of Peter's fearlessness in defending Him. He had seen several manifestations of Peter's unswerving, almost reckless, commitment to prevent any physical harm from coming to the Savior. And this was something Jesus knew could get Peter into trouble if not tempered. It would put the chief Apostle in grave physical danger. Therefore, I believe that when Jesus told Peter he would deny Him thrice before the cock crowed twice, it was not a prediction; it was a command. This is, in fact, a possible reading of the synoptic texts, according to the grammatical rules of Koine Greek found in the New Testament. Matthew 26:34, 75; Mark 14:30, 72; and Luke 22:61 all use the same verb and verb form, *aparnēsē*, which can be read as an indicative future tense or as an imperative (command) tense.²³ We are grateful to a prophet of the stature of President Kimball for helping us to look at events in the New Testament differently.

Some might ask, "Why then did Peter weep bitterly after his denial?" I believe these were tears of frustration and sorrow in the realization that he was powerless to change the Lord's fate. He had done what needed to be done, but every impulse inside him was to act differently—to prevent the suffering of the Savior. This was a bitter pill for Peter to swallow. These were tears of frustration precisely because he was obedient but now also fully cognizant of the fact that he was going to lose his Messiah to the inevitability of death. In my view, Peter's denial adds to his stature—not detracts from it!

JUST BEFORE THE ASCENSION

No doubt Peter endured some awful moments during and just after the Savior's horrible Crucifixion, but the joy of seeing for himself his risen Lord again and knowing that all the messianic promises were truly fulfilled in the Being he had followed the previous three years surely must have made up for the anguish. After His Resurrection, the Savior appeared to Peter at the Sea of Galilee (called Tiberias in John 21:1) to reinforce the most important lessons of Peter's life. John tells us that this was the Savior's third postresurrection appearance to His disciples (see John 21:14). Peter and his associates may have been frustrated, struggling to find their niche during this challenging period of transition. For when Peter

announced that he was going fishing, the others said they were going too (see John 21:3). What else was there to do besides return to their old profession now that things had changed so radically after the Resurrection and they were not sure exactly how to proceed with the work of the Lord?

After the group had fished all night and caught nothing, Jesus appeared on the shore, told them where to cast their nets, and watched them gather a miraculous harvest. When Peter realized it was Jesus, he became so eager to be reunited with his Master that he jumped into the water to hurry to shore. There he found that the Savior had fixed a fire and cooked breakfast for him and his associates. What a scene it must have been, and what emotions must have swelled within the disciples! They were cold and tired and hungry. They needed help, and once again there was the Savior to minister to their needs. We must be clear about this. The Savior of the universe had already performed an eternity's worth of service to them and all humankind through the infinite Atonement. He was God! And yet it was not beneath His dignity to care for their personal needs, to demonstrate His personal concern for their economic circumstances, to warm them and make them comfortable, and even to cook for them. In this atmosphere of total service and against the backdrop of His personal example of selfless concern for others, Jesus was able to teach Peter what he must do for the rest of his life—feed the Savior's sheep as the Savior had fed him that morning (see John 21:9–17). The rest of the New Testament from this point on shows us that the lesson was not lost on the chief Apostle.

A MIGHTY CHURCH PRESIDENT

After the Savior's ascension, it is clear that Peter assumed the reins of Church leadership with the same boldness he executed his role as chief Apostle when Jesus was on the earth. He guided the selection of Judas Iscariot's replacement in the Quorum of the Twelve by teaching powerfully from the scriptures (see Acts 1:15–26). In fact, he taught from the scriptures on many occasions. He received a reconfirming witness from the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost regarding the divinity of the work and issued his clarion call to the pentecostal converts to be baptized and receive the gift of the Holy Ghost (see Acts 2). He was arrested, imprisoned, and threatened by the Sanhedrin for powerfully declaring his eyewitness testimony of the Savior's Resurrection without equivocation, as well as charging the Jewish leaders with the death of his Master without flinching (see Acts 3:12–26; 4:8–20).

When the Lord was ready to expand His Church, He revealed to Peter His plan to allow Gentiles to be admitted to the ranks of Church membership. And it was simultaneously to Cornelius that the Lord revealed His will that Cornelius send messengers to bring Simon Peter to Caesarea (see Acts 10). This helps us to remember that as the President of the Church and the holder of the keys of the kingdom, such monumental changes in the Church were mandated by the Lord to come through Peter and through no one else.

Peter continued to have marvelous manifestations after the Lord's ascension, as when the angel of the Lord came at night to release Peter from prison and protect him from the same fate that James, the brother of John, had suffered at the hands of Herod Agrippa I (see Acts 12). In fact, the first twelve chapters of Acts center on the actions of Peter, while chapters 13–28 highlight the ministry of Paul—the great Apostle to the Gentiles. But other books make it clear that Peter continued an active ministry to and was the revered leader of the Jewish segment of the Church while Paul was working with the Gentiles (see Galatians 2:8). During this time Paul had an open dispute with Peter over the Gentiles in the Church. Apparently, at one point after submitting to the influence of James, Peter withdrew from eating with the Gentiles, for which Paul “withstood him to the face” (Galatians 2:11). Yet, as Elder McConkie pointed out, even though Paul may have had a legitimate issue to raise, Peter was still the President of the Church and Paul was still his junior.²⁴

CLOSE OF HIS MINISTRY

Toward the end of his life, Peter ended up in Rome. In one of his personal letters addressed to the Saints in the five major provinces of Asia Minor, he sends greetings from “Babylon,” which is probably none other than the great capital city of the Roman Empire (see 1 Peter 5:13). The early Church historian Eusebius tells us that 1 Peter was written in Rome.²⁵ Even more interesting is the statement telling us of those who were with Peter at that time in his life, particularly Marcus (1 Peter 5:13)—likely the same who was the author of the Gospel of Mark and scribe for the chief Apostle. One can imagine the younger John Mark recording the teachings and reminiscences of Peter, copying down the eyewitness testimony of all the Lord said and did including the foundational doctrines learned. Surely it was from these experiences with Peter that Mark gleaned the necessary

information for his Gospel record as well as the content for the two surviving letters sent by the chief Apostle.

Within Peter's two epistles is to be found an important and helpful survey of some of the major doctrines of the early Church of Jesus Christ, including the sinlessness of Jesus; the redemptive power of His atoning blood (see 1 Peter 1:18–20; 2:24–25; 3:18); the postmortal, spirit-prison ministry of Christ (see 1 Peter 3:19–20; 4:6); baptism (see 1 Peter 3:21); priesthood (see 1 Peter 2:9); and others. Some of the greatest contributions towards helping the Saints (ancient and modern) understand, appreciate, and withstand life's trials and tribulations come from Peter's two epistles. These include such encouraging exhortations as the following:

- The Saints must remember that they are the elect according to the foreknowledge of God and are kept by the power of God (see 1 Peter 1:2–5).
- The Saints should remember that adversity has eternal value (see 1 Peter 4:12–14).
- The Saints must endure in righteousness and bear afflictions patiently (see 1 Peter 2:19–20).
- The Saints will receive great blessings if they do not render evil for evil or railing for railing (see 1 Peter 3:9).
- The Saints should love and strengthen one another (see 1 Peter 1:22; 3:8).
- The Saints should remember that mortality is temporary, but God's promises are eternal (see 1 Peter 1:24–25).
- Husbands and wives should strive to strengthen marriage and family bonds (see 1 Peter 3:1–7).
- The Saints should remember the reward of false prophets, false teachers, and false disciples (see 2 Peter 2:1–4, 9, 12–14, 20–21).
- The Saints can make their calling and election sure through faith and effort (see 2 Peter 1:4–12, 18–19).

In a very touching and uplifting section of his first letter, Peter teaches us about the Savior's basic nature. Though "he was reviled [he] reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not" (1 Peter 2:23). Because of the Savior's meekness and patience in bearing His sufferings and "stripes" without revenge, by His stripes are we healed (see 1 Peter 2:24). One has little doubt that Peter saw in his Master the desirable pattern and much-to-be-sought-after ideal for his own life. Thus, as Paul did in his second letter to Timothy, Peter stated in his own second letter that he shortly "must

put off this . . . tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me" (2 Peter 1:14). This is undoubtedly a reference to the resurrected Lord's prophecy of Peter's own crucifixion as recorded in John 21:18–19: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me."

CONCLUSION

According to reputable tradition, recorded in the statements of various early authorities of the Christian Church, Peter's death fulfilled the prophecy of the Savior. The chief Apostle died in Rome—martyred in the last years of the reign of Emperor Nero (AD 67–68). In 1 Clement 5:4, it is said of Peter that he suffered not one or two but many trials, and having given his testimony, he went to the place which was his due. Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, refers to the deaths of Peter and Paul in Rome, as does Eusebius of Caesarea. Tertullian refers to three martyrdoms at Rome: Peter, Paul, and John. And, finally, Origen reported that Peter "at the end . . . came to Rome and was crucified head downwards."²⁶

To the very end, Peter followed his Lord and Master in both word and deed. He acted like Him, taught like Him, was rejected like Him, and in the end, suffered the same kind of ignominious death like Him. Thus "Peter holds up the goal of becoming godlike in every sense of the term."²⁷

Few men in history had the experiences that Peter had. Fewer still refined their understanding of the things of God and honed their spiritual sensitivity as did Peter. Even fewer served the Savior and the kingdom from start to finish with such unflagging courage and selfless dedication as did Peter. Only a handful of prophets have ever been commissioned to teach the gospel in more than one dispensation and restore their keys in this, the dispensation of the fulness of times (see D&C 7:7; 27:12; 128:20). Peter continues to be our model missionary. In giving instruction to elders of the Church in this dispensation, the Lord commanded them to do exactly as Peter of old: preach faith, repentance, baptism, and the gift of the Holy Ghost (see D&C 49:11–14). But Peter also made it clear that Christlike love is the ultimate measure of spiritual progression (see 1 Peter 1:22; 4:8; 2 Peter 1:7).

NOTES

1. This is the judgment of many historians. See, for example, John P. McKay and others, *A History of World Societies*, 2d ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1988), 199.
2. Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2d ed. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), 571.
3. Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *The Holy Land: An Archaeological Guide from Earliest Times to 1700*, 3d ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 223.
4. Murphy-O'Connor, *Holy Land*, 225.
5. This is the actual NIV wording of this passage, which is closer to the modern colloquial meaning intended by the Greek text than the KJV demonstrates.
6. Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1970), 365.
7. Floyd V. Filson, "Peter," in George A. Buttrick, ed., *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), 3:749.
8. In addition to the Joseph Smith Translation Appendix at the back of the LDS edition of the Bible, see Thomas A. Wayment, ed., *The Complete Joseph Smith Translation of the New Testament: A Side-by-Side Comparison with the King James Version* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2005).
9. Harold B. Lee, in Conference Report, October 1953, 25.
10. *The Life and Teachings of Jesus and His Apostles* (Salt Lake City: Church Educational System, 1979), 200.
11. Russell M. Nelson, in Conference Report, April 1993, 52.
12. Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965–73), 2:143.
13. James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1962), 364.
14. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 368.
15. Neal A. Maxwell, "Meekness—A Dimension of True Discipleship," *Ensign*, March 1983, 71.
16. Joseph Smith Translation, Mark 9:3.
17. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 1:400.
18. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 1:400.
19. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 109.
20. I am indebted to Richard D. Draper for articulating so well the concept being taught by Joseph Smith Translation, 2 Peter 1:19.
21. Spencer W. Kimball, "Peter, My Brother," in *Life and Teachings of Jesus and His Apostles*, 488–89.
22. Kimball, "Peter, My Brother," 489.

23. Luke 22:34 also uses *aparnese* (identical to all the other synoptic texts); however, the context seems to force a different sense. Yet when Luke repeats the verb form in verse 61 of the same chapter, he falls back to the same construction and sense that Matthew and Mark use. Personal communication with Richard D. Draper.
24. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 2:463–64.
25. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, translated by Kirsopp Lake, 2 vols., Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 2.15.2.
26. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 3.1.2. For an excellent summary of these sources see Filson, “Peter,” in Buttrick, *Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, 3:755.
27. Richard L. Anderson, “Peter’s Letters: Progression for the Living and the Dead,” *Ensign*, October 1991, 7.