

Knowledge: The Keynote of 2 Peter

by Bryan Gibson

Start reading 2 Peter and it won't take you long to see that knowledge is the keynote, or the central theme of this epistle (1:2-3, 5-6, 8, 12, 15; 2:20; 3:17-18). Let's explore this theme a little further, using these two questions to frame our discussion: (1) What is it exactly that God wants us to know? (2) What benefits will come from this knowledge? Let's see what answers this epistle provides.

What is it exactly that God wants us to know?

God wants us to know the truth He has revealed to us—truth which contains “all things that pertain to life and godliness” (1:3). We know it's the truth, because it was made known by “eyewitnesses of His majesty” (1:16), and what these eyewitnesses heard and saw confirmed and fulfilled what the prophets had already spoken (1:19), and these same prophets “spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (1:21).

God wants us to know both the Old Testament and the New Testament—“be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior” (3:2).

God wants us to know **Him**, especially as He is revealed through the life of Jesus (1:2-3, 8). We need to know what He says, but we also need to know **Him** through what He says. That's important, because He wants us to be “partakers of the divine nature” (1:4), to be holy as He is holy (1 Peter 1:15-16).

God wants us to know all the incentives offered to us in His word—all the “exceedingly great and precious promises” (1:4). All the knowledge in the world can't save us, unless we “do” (1:10), and to help us do, we've got all these wonderful promises set before us (see 1:10-11; 3:10-14).

What benefits will come from this knowledge?

Knowledge will enable us to escape the corruption and pollutions of this world (1:3-4; 2:19-20), because the truth will convict us of our sins, reveal the eternal consequences of our sins, and then show us the way of salvation through Jesus Christ. And we won't ever want to go back to those pollutions, because the more we grow in knowledge (3:17), the more we appreciate the contrast between the ugliness of sin and the beauty of righteousness.

Knowledge will protect us from false teachers. An entire chapter is devoted to warning us about false teachers—their danger (2:1-3), their doom (2:4-10a); their character (2:10b-16), and their influence (2:17-22). “Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,” and we won’t be “led away with the error of the wicked” (3:17-18).

Knowledge of the truth will enable us to become “partakers of the divine nature” (1:4). The more we grow in knowledge, and the more we do what we know, the more like Christ we become.