

## Course Outline

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### **Contend for the Faith/Where is the Promise of His Coming?**

#### **Jude and II Peter**

##### **Introduction to Jude**

##### **I. Relationship with 2 Peter**

- a. It is quite possible that considering Jude at this point breaks the chronological sequence of the non-Pauline epistles that we are otherwise following. But it is natural to treat Jude with II Peter (and so to put it after I Peter in our survey), because there seems to be a literary relationship between these two short epistles. Much of the imagery, detail, and even specific wording of Jude closely matches that of II Peter 2. It is usually assumed that Jude is the earlier of the two, because (1) there would have been little need for Jude had II Peter already been written, and (2) Jude follows a more carefully structured and obviously Jewish form of argument, much more than we would expect if Jude were the one copying and modifying 2 Peter.

##### **II. Authorship**

- a. The claim of v. 1 is that the author of this book is Jude, brother of James, hence presumably also the (half) brother of Jesus (cf. Mark 6:3). The author's thought world is certainly that of apocalyptic Judaism. The whole letter is structured around references to Old Testament and intertestamental literature. Some have seen the false teachers Jude opposes as early Gnostics, but the only clear theological persuasion of the heretics is their antinomianism. Other modern scholars attempt to link Jude with the world of early Catholicism (and hence a late first-century date, requiring pseudonymity), which is often defined by (1) a fading hope of the Parousia; (2) the increasing institutionalization of the church; and (3) the crystallization of faith into a fixed body of doctrine. The last of these would fit well with v. 3, and v. 17 could be taken to look back on a past, apostolic age. But there, Jude refers to the apostles simply because he wasn't one of

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them, while “the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints” (v. 3) refers to the gospel, not to church tradition. And vv. 6, 21, and 24 make it clear that Jude still exercised a lively hope of Christ’s return.

### III. Destination

- a. Nor have we much clue as to the recipients of this short letter. It was most readily accepted early on in Alexandria, but the types of immorality it combats were widespread. Other suggestions have included both Syria and Asia Minor.

### IV. Date

- a. Assuming II Peter is authentic (see below), then it must be dated before Peter’s death, which was sometime during Nero’s pogrom (NIV 64–68). Jude must thus be dated earlier still, but how much earlier we simply have no way of knowing.
- b. So it is best to see Jude as an early Jewish-Christian document well within the first generation of Christianity. In fact, it seems the brothers and other relatives of Jesus held more prominent roles in early Christian history than we often give them credit for.<sup>166</sup> Here then is a unique glimpse into one short document from that circle.

## Analysis<sup>167</sup>

### I. Introduction (vv. 1-4)

- a. Greeting (vv.1-2)
  - i. Verses 1-2 extend the most general of all New Testament epistolary greetings, but presumably Jude has some specific audience in mind even if he does not identify it more precisely.
- b. Main purpose for writing (vv. 3-4)
  - i. Verses 3-4 explain that Jude had originally hoped to write a different kind of letter, but, upon learning of heresy troubling his audience,

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changed directions. This heresy is insidious (“secretly slipped in”) and thus all the more dangerous. Jude’s opponents are promoting a godless, immoral lifestyle; beyond that we know few specifics of their errors. The rest of the letter is not so much a refutation of their false doctrine (if any) but an *ad hominem* or *ad hoc* attack on their character, marshalling numerous wicked analogies from Jewish history and tradition.

- II. Description and Denunciation of the False Teachers (vv. 5-19)
  - a. Their immorality illustrated by three Old Testament analogies (vv. 5-8)
    - i. Verses 5-7 illustrate the false teachers’ *immorality* via three Old Testament analogies: (1) Though mixed in with God’s people, these are really unbelievers like the Israelites who died in the wilderness (v. 5). (2) A major problem is their sexual sin, as when the fallen angels led astray the particularly wicked race in the days of the flood (v. 6).<sup>168</sup> (3) This sin seems to have included homosexuality, as in Sodom and Gomorrah (v. 7). All three of these examples further underline the certainty of God’s judgment against such sinners.
  - b. Their blasphemy illustrated by analogy from The Assumption of Moses (vv. 9-10)
    - i. Verses 8-10 illustrate the false teachers’ blasphemy by an analogy from the intertestamental Jewish work, *The Assumption of Moses*. In it, the story is told of how Michael refused to slander the devil. The point is not that we should treat Satan gently but that all judgment is reserved for the Lord. These false teachers were apparently setting themselves up as incontestable authorities, especially if they were judging the Law, but in so doing they were setting themselves up for divine condemnation as well.
  - c. Their false leadership illustrated by three more Old Testament analogies (vv. 11-12a)
    - i. Verses 11-12a illustrate *the heretics’ false leadership* by three more Old Testament analogies: (1) Cain—in the Old Testament he was known

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primarily as the first murderer, but in Jewish tradition he became a paradigm of false teaching, and one second-century Gnostic sect called themselves Cainites. (2) Balaam—despite initially resisting bribes offered him to curse Israel, he eventually used his leadership role as pagan prophet to seduce the Israelite women (cf. Numbers 31:16 with chapter 25 and see also Revelation 2:14). (3) Korah—Moses' rival in Numbers 16 was eventually swallowed up by the earth. Thus these three examples support the charge of v. 12a—that the false teachers are “shepherds who feed only themselves.”

- d. Their lawlessness illustrated by four analogies from nature (vv. 12b-13)
  - i. Verses 12b-13 illustrate the false teachers' lawlessness by four analogies of “unnatural” events in nature, one from each of the four parts of the universe—air, earth, water, and heavens.
- e. Their judgment promised by quotation from 1 Enoch (vv. 14-16)
  - i. Verses 14-16 guarantee the false teachers' *judgment* by a quotation from I Enoch 1:9, a widely-used late, intertestamental Jewish apocalypse. Jude's use of “prophecy” does not mean he believed this book to be inspired (cf. Jesus' reference to Caiaphas in John 11:51), merely that this particular statement was true, and applicable to the false teachers he was combating. The phrase “seventh from Adam” comes from the book itself (60:8) and thus helps to identify Jude's source; it is not an affirmation of authorship. The teaching of vv. 14b-15 is in fundamental agreement with Jesus' and Paul's, all ultimately rooted in Zechariah 14:5.<sup>169</sup>
- f. Their existence explained by apostolic teaching (vv. 17-19)
  - i. Verses 17-19 conclude the body of the letter by explaining the *existence* of these false teachers via apostolic predictions. Verse 18 is not necessarily a quotation from any one source but a good summary of an important New Testament theme. Whether simple antinomians or proto-Gnostics, the errorists were most likely claiming the true insight of the Spirit, and Jude here directly contests this claim (v. 19).

### III. How to Stand Firm (vv. 20-24)

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- a. Jude closes the letter by encouraging his readers to build each other and themselves up in faith through prayer (v. 20). They must exhibit love and mercy, even though this may take on severe forms to rescue those most in danger of going astray (vv. 21-23). Ultimately, though, God will empower them, and the epistle closes with a marvelous doxology affirming this fact (vv. 24-25).

### **Application – The Limits of Tolerance**

- i. One might sum up the abiding relevance of Jude with the slogan, “tolerance has its limits.”<sup>170</sup> In an age of pluralism, in which at times the only thing not tolerated is intolerance, Jude sends sharply countercultural signals. His strategy, too, is out of vogue—he does not argue rationally but emotionally, denouncing the false teachers’ behavior more than their theology. But this is merely a foreshadowing of what God will do on Judgment Day. We must engage in dialogue and debate with heretics of our day with kindness and compassion, but we must also recognize that there are boundaries to be drawn, there are religious options which are highly dangerous, and people must be warned against them in no uncertain terms.

### **Introduction to II Peter**

#### **I. Authorship**

- a. Objections to Peter (ancient and modern)
  - i. Most of the New Testament writings, which many modern scholars find pseudonymous, were uncontested in antiquity. With II Peter, however, doubts have circulated from the earliest periods of church history on. As a result, no other New Testament document has received as sustained a challenge to its traditional authorship claims as this one. Ancient objections included lack of sufficient, external attestation; a dramatic difference in style from I Peter (II Peter contains some of the most awkward grammar of the New Testament—touches of high-blown, classical style mixed with very “un-Greek” barbarisms); and thoroughly Hellenistic theology (even to the

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point of speaking of Christians “participating in the divine nature,” 1:4, reminiscent of pagan apotheosis—humans becoming divine). Additional modern objections include II Peter’s relationship with Jude (even if Jude is authentic, why would the leader of the Twelve want to borrow from such a “lesser light”?), and theological developments seemingly requiring at least a late first-century date, including the problem of the delay of Christ’s return (3:4); a reference to a previous apostolic era (3:2); and a period of time after which a collection of Paul’s letters have become canonical (3:15).

- b. Traditional evangelical defense of Peter
  - i. Nevertheless, many evangelicals continue to defend the authenticity of II Peter.<sup>171</sup> The external attestation for the letter is still better than for any non-canonical writing, and the two New Testament apocrypha ascribed to Peter (an apocalypse and a gospel) were particularly sharply denounced in the early church. If Silas is responsible for the good Greek of I Peter, then II Peter might reflect the best Peter could do with Greek. If Peter were impressed with the arguments Jude had used against similar false teachers, there is no reason he should refuse to borrow some of them. The delay of the *parousia* was a problem already in the 50s (recall I Thessalonians); the “fathers” of 3:4 could be Old Testament leaders, not a bygone apostolic generation; and there is no reason why several of Paul’s letters should not already have been accepted as Scripture within 10–15 years of their publication. The author makes claims that suggest he was an eyewitness of the Transfiguration (1:16), and a more careful comparison with I Peter shows numerous similarities in wording as well as differences in style.<sup>172</sup>
- c. A mediating view
  - i. A mediating view postulates that II Peter was a posthumously edited “last testament” of Peter.<sup>173</sup> This was a well-known ancient genre, often though not necessarily pseudepigraphical. Chapter 1:15 could suggest that Peter began the process of collecting his thoughts and had arranged for a successor to complete the work if death prevented

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him from doing so. Tertullian (*Against Marcion* 4:5) and the Mishnah (*Berakoth* 5:5) both suggest that at least by AD 200 it was considered acceptable for a pupil to publish in his master's name.

### II. Date

- a. If at least the core of the work is Petrine, then it must be dated prior to AD 68, as already noted with I Peter above. If its final form comes from one of Peter's disciples, a later first-century date is likely. Proponents of pure pseudonymity have suggested dates as late as the mid-second century.

### III. Addressees

- a. If 3:1 refers back to I Peter, then II Peter is addressed to the same audience. If not, the recipients could be just about anyone. Again, the counteracting of false teachers is a key reason for the epistle, but here a major doctrinal issue emerges—the denial of the Parousia and therefore of final judgment. This could fit the overly-realized eschatology of certain Gnostic or proto-Gnostic libertines (recall under I Corinthians 15), but it could just as easily fit the Epicurean philosophy.<sup>174</sup>

## Analysis

### I. Opening Remarks (1:1-15)

- a. Greetings (vv. 1-2)
  - i. Verses 1-2 form the greeting and contain an important passing reference to the deity of Christ.
- b. Summary of God's promises and demands for the Christian (vv. 3-11)
  - i. Verses 3-11 form a summary of God's promises and demands. For the Christian, similar to the ancient patron-client relationship, God has given us true knowledge and immortality (vv. 3-4), but this must lead to true morality (vv. 5-9). In context, "participating in the divine nature" (v. 4) is defined as growing in all the godly attributes itemized in vv. 5-7. The result is to make our "calling and election sure"—

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- perhaps in the sense of “assurance of salvation” (vv. 10-11).
- c. Testamentary disposition (vv. 12-15)
    - i. Verses 12-15 reflect Peter’s testamentary disposition, discussed in the introduction above.
- II. The Certainty of the Parousia is Defended (1:16-21)
- a. It is possible that the body of the letter itemizes three separate problems with the false teachers Peter is combating: denial of the inspiration of Scripture, immoral lifestyle, and denial of Christ’s return and final judgment. But, more likely, all three of these fit into the one main problem of questioning the *parousia* itemized in 3:4.
    - i. Peter experienced the transfiguration as foretaste (vv. 16-18)
      - 1. Peter therefore appeals to his experience of the Transfiguration as a foreshadowing of Christ’s return in glory, and insists that this story is no mere myth (vv. 16-18).
    - ii. Old Testament prophets also promised the Day of the Lord (vv. 19-21)
      - 1. This in turn renders the Old Testament prophecies about the Day of the Lord much more certain (vv. 19-21). In passing, Peter includes a passage important for our understanding of the nature of Scripture’s inspiration: people were “carried along” by the Spirit’s superintendence (v. 21).
- III. The Denial of the Parousia Brings Severe Judgment (2:1-22)
- a. See Jude for more detailed comments
    - i. Much of this material has already been treated in our discussion of Jude.
  - b. Here we note only II Peter’s major distinctives
    - i. Peter’s distinctives include (1) his reference to the false teachers as “denying the Lord who bought them” (v. 1)—not necessarily meaning they were true Christians who had committed apostasy (Christ died for all) but probably that they refused to accept his authority over their lives; (2) an emphasis on their greed (vv. 3, 14-15); (3) the use of

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the examples of Noah and Lot as generally righteous men (vv. 5, 7); (4) the reference to angels not slandering (vv. 10b-12)—perhaps rebutting the disbelief in the reality of judgment in an accompanying unseen world; and (5) a balance between an appearance of true Christianity (vv. 20-21) with a revelation of the true nature of these opponents (v. 22).

### IV. The Delay of the Parousia is Explained (3:1-10)

- a. A naturalistic objection (vv. 1-4)
  - i. The key objection of the false teachers is a naturalism or uniformitarianism (vv. 1-4), remarkably similar to the most common modern objection to belief in Christ's literal return.
- b. Two major exceptions to this pattern (vv. 5-6)
  - i. But Peter stresses that this overlooks two great events which cannot be accounted for by naturalistic processes—creation (v. 5) and the flood (v. 6).
- c. Next great interruption can be affirmed (vv. 7-10)
  - i. Thus the next great interruption by God into the universe can be affirmed—the destruction of this world order and the creation of the next (v. 7, cf. vv. 10b, 12b-13).
    - 1. Verse 9—the key verse in the epistle
      - A. The key answer to all questions about the seeming delay of the end appears in vv. 8-10a. God's timing is not human timing. After all, what is “short” in the span of eternity? Peter, like other Jews before him trying to explain the “delay” of the Day of the Lord, appeals to Psalms 90:1 (v. 8).<sup>175</sup> The purpose in every delay is so that more might be saved. God wants (but will not force) everyone to come to repentance (v. 9). Eventually there will be a limit to opportunities for salvation, and the end will come without warning for those who are unprepared (v. 10a; cf. I Thessalonians 5:2 with Matthew 24:43).

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- 2. Specifically as the key rationale for delay of the end
- V. Resulting Implications for Christian Living (3:11-18)176
  - a. Live holy, grace-filled lives (vv. 11, 14, 18)
    - i. Peter concludes his letter by exhorting his readers to live holy, grace-filled lives (vv. 11, 14, 18)—i.e., the opposite of the false teachers.
  - b. As more are saved, His return will be nearer (vv. 12a, 15a)
    - i. As more are saved, his return will be nearer (vv. 12a, 150, but since we don't know that "full number" we can make no predictions of the timing of the end on this basis.
  - c. Guard against those who distort the Scriptures (vv. 15b-17)

### **Application – Implications for Evangelism**

- a. Second Peter provides perhaps the classic New Testament answer to the question of theodicy—the problem of evil. Why does God delay in righting all the wrongs of the world? Every Christian should have at least this one answer to that question memorized—based on II Peter 3:9. He waits because the only way life can do away with all evil is to do away with this world as we know it, and that will mean an end to the chance for more to be saved. So, while He delays, we must do all we can to bring as many as we can to Christ, thus giving meaning to this otherwise unjust world which will eventually be destroyed.

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