

Study 12: Peter & Jude

These three letters are all “general epistles” not written to specific churches or persons.

Second Peter and Jude both give us practical advice in facing the trials and tribulations of life in the face of a society that is against us.

Introduction

Peter’s Letters - Authorship

Second Peter - Authorship

First Peter – Recipients

First Peter – Date and Occasion

First Peter – Brief Outline

Second Peter – Recipients

Second Peter – Date and Occasion

Second Peter – Brief Outline

Jude - Authorship

Jude – Recipients

Jude – Date and Occasion

Jude – Brief Outline

Homework and preparation for next week:

- Read the notes as a review of the study
- *Think about the time of the Lord’s return. What will it be like for you? Scary? Frightening? Relief? Comfortable? What assurances does Peter give us in this letter about that time?*
- Skim read 1,2,&3 John & Revelation chapters 1, 21 & 22
 - What are the common themes running through John’s letters?
 - Why do you think he wrote the letters?
 - Who do you think he was addressing the letters to?
 - What was the major issue that caused Revelation to be written?
 - How does Revelation give us assurance?

Notes for study 12: Peter & Jude

Introduction

These three letters are all “general epistles” not written to specific churches or persons.

Second Peter and Jude both give us practical advice in facing the trials and tribulations of life in the face of a society that is against us.

Peter’s Letters - Authorship

The writer claims to be “*Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ*”. There is only one Peter who was an apostle, and he was one of the three inner sanctum (Peter, James and John). He is always mentioned first in the lists of apostles, and he was the one to whom the Lord promised *the keys of the kingdom* (Mt 16:19). It was also Peter who preached the first gospel sermon (at Pentecost – Acts 2), and preached at the conversion of the first Gentiles (Acts 10 & 11).

The letter was scribed by Silas, the often time companion of Paul (1:5:12), and has a short note at the end penned in Peter’s own hand (1:5:12-14).

However some scholars have questioned the authorship of the first letter, with the primary objection being the construction of the Greek language. The argument is that Peter was a fisherman (along with his brother Andrew), and would have had only a poor general education. He was recognised as *uneducated and untrained* (Acts 4:13) and his native tongue would have been a Galilean dialect of Hebrew. He would not have had a good grasp of the Greek language that the letter was written in. Further, he quotes from the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament), and such knowledge is inconsistent with his upbringing. In contrast to Peter’s background, the letter is regarded as an excellent example of the use of the Greek language.

But most of the objectors seem to overlook that Peter was reciting the letter to Silas as his scribe. Silas may very well have corrected some of the poor language to give the letter its “polish”. Whilst some may object that this would mean that Silas was changing the thoughts that had been given to Peter through the Holy Spirit, and as such he had no authority to do so, we need to remember that God had a plan as to how the very words and thoughts that we read in the scriptures came to be just the way that they are! If we take the view that Silas only wrote down *exactly* what Peter told him to write, then we need to remember that these things were what the Holy Spirit had given to Peter. As a general rule, it can be said that the *thoughts* were given to the authors by inspiration, and the writers then expressed those thoughts into their own words. Hence we see different styles in the writings of the New Testament, but consistency in the message, and the absence of contradiction. Both the internal and external evidence confirm the work as Peter’s:

Internal evidence for Peter’s authorship is strong. He claims to be Peter the apostle, and “a witness of the sufferings of Christ” (1:5:1). There are also similarities with some things that we might expect to find with Peter. He exhorts the elders to “Shepherd the flock of God which is among you” (1:5:2), which is reminiscent of Jesus’ instruction to “Feed my sheep” (Jn 21:15-17).

In addition, there are similarities between Peter’s sermons in Acts, including some references to the Holy Spirit (Acts 2; 1:1:12); The resurrection (Acts 2, 3, 4, & 10; 1:1:3,21; 1:3:18); and the Second Coming (Acts 3:20; 1:1:7, 13; 1:4:13). Whilst these things don’t prove authorship, they do provide some support to the claim by their association.

External evidence from some early Christian writers includes Irenaeus (AD 185), Tertullian (AD 200), Clement of Alexandria (AD 200). These writers all quote from the epistle and attribute the work to Peter. Other earlier writers quote from the epistle, although they do not name the author. These include Clement of Rome (AD 95), Polycarp (AD 155), and Justin Martyr (AD 165), which shows that the work was regarded as scripture at an early date. Origen created a catalogue

of Canonical books, including the epistles of Peter, around AD 200 (or only about 100 years after the death of the last apostle, John). Eusebius quotes from the list and says:

And Peter, on whom the Church of Christ is built, 'against which the gates of hell shall not prevail,' has left one acknowledged epistle; perhaps also a second, but this is doubtful¹.

Acceptance of 2nd Peter as a part of the New Testament Canon is the most disputed of all of the disputed books. Yet, the book provides a great hope in proclaiming the certainty of the Lord's return in the face of the sceptics of the time.

Second Peter - Authorship

The second letter is quite short, and may have been personally penned by Peter. Many scholars deny Peter as the author, and regard the letter as a tribute to Peter written by someone else. Much of the "criticism" relates to the construction of the language, which is significantly different to the first epistle, and to that which Luke has recorded in Peter's speeches. However, the differences can be easily understood, since Silas penned the first letter, and he may very well have corrected Peter's poor Greek grammar, whereas Peter may well have personally written the second letter.

Internal evidence for Peter's authorship is strong. First and foremost he claims to be Simon Peter the apostle (2:1:1), and that he was "an eyewitness of His majesty" (2:1:16). He also claimed to be one who was present at the Transfiguration (2:1:17-18), where he makes comments which are not recorded in the gospels. Further, he claims to be the same person who authored the first letter (2:3:1), and as an apostle to speak with authority (2:3:2). He also claims that his writings were contemporary with Paul's writings (2:3:15-16), and were to be regarded as scripture (2:3:16).

External evidence for 2nd Peter is weak, and no writer in the first two centuries quotes 2nd Peter by name. Origen's catalogue of Canonical books, includes the epistles of Peter.

So, we can clearly see that there is strong evidence for the authorship of the first epistle, although it is perhaps not as strong for the authorship of the second.

First Peter – Recipients

The letter is general in its nature, and addressed to "...*the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia...*" (1:1:1 NKJV). It is clearly written to Christians who have been dispersed "...*elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father...*" (1:1:2 NKJV). All of these were Roman provinces to the north of the Taurus Mountains in what is now modern-day Turkey. Peter must have had some form of association with these brethren, although we don't know when and how. If the *northern* Galatian region is what Peter has in mind (which fits with the northerly location of the provinces mentioned), then we have no record of Paul visiting those areas, and it is quite likely that Peter may have done so after AD 51. It should be noted that some of the brethren from Acts 2 came from those named provinces, and following the dispersion of Acts 8 would have likely returned home and established the churches there. Further, they would have had some association with Peter whilst they were in Jerusalem.

First Peter – Date and Occasion

Occasion:

In the early days the Christian church created little resistance from, or conflict with, the Roman government, and the church grew throughout the Roman Empire with quiet assimilation. However, under the latter days of Nero, the political climate changed significantly, eventually resulting in the execution of both Peter and Paul. An inevitable question amongst the Christians

¹ Ecclesiastical History Book 6; Chapter 25

would be whether such persecution would extend further than Rome, and would reach into the regions of northern Asia. Cogdill writes²:

When the Churches began to recognize this change in attitude upon the part of the Roman government, they became fearful of what the consequence would be. They had no organized resistance to withstand it, for this would be a violation of their own principle of peaceful obedience to the government and would only arouse further persecution against them. The question of whether or not they faced extinction and complete suppression no doubt occurred, and in their minds was raised the question of what the outcome would be. They wondered if the brutality of Nero would be duplicated in the provinces. They were looking to their teachers and leaders for the answers to these questions.

First Peter was written in reply to this situation and circumstances as it affected the churches of northern Asia Minor and the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.

Date:

Since Peter died at the same time as Paul, around May of AD 68 then the letter has to be written before that time. It also had to be written at a time when the persecution was beginning to spread – which makes it after AD 63 – as Paul was released from Nero’s custody at that time and went on his 4th missionary journey. A time between AD 65 and AD 67 would seem likely.

Further to understanding the date, is understanding where the letter was written from. Peter makes reference to Babylon – “...*She who is in Babylon, elect together with you, greets you: and so does Mark my son...*” (1:5:13 NKJV). This could be a euphemistic reference to Rome, as “Babylon” was often used in such a way, indicating a place of exile. If Rome was the place of writing, then the time would likely have been late in the period (late AD 67 or even early AD 68).

Alternately, Peter may have actually been in Babylon. There was a large Jewish population there. However, for this to be the place of authorship would require Peter, Silas, and John Mark all to have been in Babylon. Prior to that time, there had been a general exodus from Babylon to Seleucia (Josephus, Antiq. 18:9:8-9), and at that time Babylon was in significant decline.

That Peter used Babylon as a euphemism for Rome, and that the letter was written from Rome is settled as best we can conclude the matter, by Eusebius (Book 2, Chapter 15):

And Peter makes mention of Mark in his first epistle which they say that he wrote in Rome itself, as is indicated by him, when he calls the city, by a figure, Babylon, as he does in the following words: "The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you; and so doth Marcus my son."

So, the letter is placed as having been written from Rome after the close of the Acts narrative, and after Paul had left in AD 63, and before Peter’s execution in May AD 68.

First Peter – Brief Outline

The following outline is adapted from Fee & Stuart³

- 1:1-2 *Salutation,*
- 1:3-12 *A Blessing of God*
- 1:13-2:10 *Call to Holy Living as God’s People*
- 2:11-3:7 *The Call Particularized in Various Pagan Settings*
- 3:8-4:11 *The Call Generalized – in the Face of Hostility*
- 4:12-5:11 *Conclusion: Suffering, Hope, and Christian Conduct*

² Cogdill, p. 155

³ Fee & Stuart p. 404-406

- 5:12-14 *Final Greetings*

Like James, 1st Peter is a very practical book, which deals with the practical application of our faith in the challenges of the real world. The letter's primary purpose is to give encouragement and instruction for Christian living in the face of suffering and hostility. Peter tends to jump from one theme to the other, and then back again time and time again.

Christ in His suffering and overcoming through the resurrection permeates the whole letter, and it is particularly relevant to the suffering of the Christians in the Roman Empire in the first century (and even more so in the second and third centuries). The letter is intensely practical, and Peter gives some specific instructions for dealing with the situations of life that they find themselves in. It is full of encouragement in the face of the trials and suffering.

Second Peter – Recipients

Like the first letter, the second is general in its nature. The first letter was addressed to “...*the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia...*” (1:1:1 NKJV), and Peter clearly has the same group in mind with the second letter, “...*I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure mind by way of reminder)...*” (2:3:1 NKJV).

Second Peter – Date and Occasion

Occasion:

The occasion of the letter is difficult to determine, and the best explanation is that Peter wanted the brethren to remain faithful after his death, despite the difficulties they were facing, and the denial of many concerning the faith.

Date:

Just as the authorship of 2nd Peter is questioned, so too is the date. Some writers ascribe the letter as being written before 1st Peter. Much of the discussion arises from similarity between 2nd Peter and Jude, and then the question of which letter came first. Added to this is discussion around the content and context of the letter regarding apostasy and Gnosticism. Part of this comes from the use of the future tense “...*even as there will be false teachers among you...*” (2:2:1 and other places). Clearly, at the time of Paul's writings, these things were already occurring.

However, the similarities between writings should not be driven in an attempt to say that one writer “copied” or “followed an outline or theme” from another writer. This is especially so when both writers (in this case Peter and Jude) wrote general epistles addressing how Christians should live in response to the political and spiritual climate of the time; and also that both writers wrote what they did by inspiration from God.

Since Peter died around May of AD 68 then the letter has to be written before that time. If dated after the first letter, then a time after AD 67 would seem likely. We would have to suppose the letter was written from the same place as the first – “Babylon” a euphemistic reference to Rome.

So, in conclusion, the second letter is placed as having been written from Rome after the first letter (AD 66 or 67) and before Peter's execution in May AD 68. The flow of the letter also suggests that Peter is making his “farewell speech” “...*knowing that I must shortly put off my tent as the Lord has shown me ... I will be careful to ensure that you have a reminder of these things after my decease...*” (2:1:14-15).

Second Peter – Brief Outline

The following outline is adapted from Fee & Stuart⁴

- 1:1-2 *Salutation,*
- 1:3-11 *Godliness and the Eternal Kingdom*
- 1:12-21 *Peter's Last Testament*
- 2:1-22 *Indictment of the False Teachers*
- 3:1-10 *False Teaching: Denial of the Lord's Coming*
- 3:11-18 *Exhortation and Conclusion*

Peter's purpose in writing both the first and second letters was "...to stir up your pure minds by way of reminder..." (2:3:1). A focus on Godly living in the face of those who deny the Lord's coming runs through the letter. It is intensely relevant to our present situation. He explains his purpose in two other places "...therefore I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know them and are established in the present truth..." (2:1:12); and "...but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ..." (2:3:18). The letter forms a type of "farewell speech" from Peter, as he gives instruction and encouragement to the brethren, when he himself is facing trials and persecution that would result in the end of his life.

Jude - Authorship

The writer claims to be "...Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James..." (1:1 NKJV). He makes no further claim or explanation as to which Jude, or which James are in question. There were several men named Jude who featured in the New Testament, with two of them amongst the apostles, being Judas Iscariot and Judas the brother of James (Lk 6:16 KJV). However, other translations have "...Judas the son of James..." and the Greek is not specific, except to identify that there is a relationship between these two men.

Jude does not identify which James he is the brother of, but that he simply refers to "*James*" suggests that the readers would know who that James was! The only James that had such prominence in the early church at that time was James the Lord's brother. We know that Jesus had several (half) brothers and sisters "...Isn't this the carpenter's son? Isn't his mother's name Mary, and aren't his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas? ⁵⁶ Aren't all his sisters with us?..." (Mt 13:55-56 NIV); and we know that two of them were James and Jude. So, the logical conclusion is that it was Jude the Lord's brother who was the author of the letter.

Neither James nor Jude claim in their writings to be the brothers of the Lord, but rather to be His servants, which shows their great humility. Two tests confirm the work as belonging to Jude – the internal evidence, and the external evidence:

Internal evidence for Jude's authorship is purely based on his claim in 1:1, as we have no other writings to compare it to, although there are strong similarities between Jude and 2nd Peter. He also talks about the Lord's apostles in the third person – ie he was not one of them.

External evidence for Jude is strong, and Origen (AD 230) says that the author of Jude was the Jude mentioned in the gospels as a brother of Jesus. Jerome (AD 392) also describes the book as having been written by "Jude the brother of James".

Early writers regarded it as scripture, including the Muratorian canon (AD 170). Tertullian (AD 200) recognised the book as an ancient Christian document, and Clement of Alexandria (AD 200) had so much respect for the book that he wrote a commentary on it! Origen did not include it in his catalogue of Canonical books, although elsewhere refers to it, and says: "*And Jude wrote an*

⁴ Fee & Stuart, p. 409-410

epistle, of a few lines indeed, but full of powerful words of the heavenly grace, who at the beginning says: Jude the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James”

Jude – Recipients

Jude addresses some specific problems, and may have had a specific church or group of churches in mind when he wrote the letter – but he doesn’t let us in on just who they are! It is strongly Jewish in its content, and draws significantly on the Jewish apocryphal writers (*The Assumption of Moses; The Book of Enoch; The Testament of Naphtali; The Testament of Asher*), and it is clear that his readers understood where the facts and writings came from. The recipients apparently had personal knowledge of both Jude and James. The Lord’s brothers apparently travelled around quite a bit (1 Cor 9:5), and as the letter mirrors 2nd Peter, then it is not unreasonable that the recipients of the letter were in a similar area (Asia Minor generally), although we cannot have any degree of certainty in this regard.

Jude – Date and Occasion

Occasion:

In many ways Jude and 2nd Peter parallel each other, suggesting that they were written to address similar situations. The false teachers (the Gnostics in 2nd Peter, although not clear in Jude) were libertines who were travelling around introducing the false deceptive doctrines. Jude writes to warn the brethren about these people.

Jude intended to write a longer letter “...concerning our common salvation...” (1:4), yet he found it necessary to write the short letter – probably forced by the urgency of the situation. His stated purpose is to “...exhort you to contend earnestly for the faith...” (1:4).

Date:

A date around the same time as 2nd Peter, around AD 67 is concluded because of the similarity of the letters and the problems in the churches that they are addressing.

Jude – Brief Outline

The following outline is adapted from Fee & Stuart⁵

- 1-2 *Salutation,*
- 3-4 *Reason for Writing*
- 5-7 *Three Warning Examples*
- 8-10 *Second Description of False Teachers*
- 11-16 *Further Warning Examples*
- 17-19 *Apostolic Warning*
- 20-23 *Call to Perseverance*
- 24-25 *Benediction*

At first read, Jude seems to be nothing but a string of criticism and denunciation. But the clear message is to encourage the brethren to stand fast in the face of adversity within the church. Rather than adverse criticism of these people, he gives practical advice on how to deal with them, and shows great pastoral care for them (22-23).

“Jude is ... a passionate defence of Jewish Christian faith and life to believers living in the midst of a pluralistic and permissive pagan society. And therein lies one of its great values for Christians the world over in our own day”⁶

⁵ Fee & Stuart, p. 409-410

⁶ Green, Michael; “Second Peter & Jude” Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, ISBN 0-8028-0078-5 p. 54
Piecing together the New Testament by Graeme Offer