

New Testament Literature: 2 Peter and Jude

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Abstract

In Lecture 32 of New Testament Literature, Dr. Dave Mathewson examines the close literary relationship, thematic parallels, and ethical directives found in 2 Peter and Jude. Both letters address the threat of antinomian false teachers who denied future divine judgment to justify living immoral and lawless lives. Utilizing the testamentary genre and drawing from Old Testament judgment narratives as well as Jewish traditions, Peter and Jude urge early Christian communities to embrace both orthodoxy and orthopraxy by contending for the faith and pursuing holy living in light of Christ's return.

Outline

I. Introduction and Canonical Overview

- A. Relationship between 2 Peter and Jude
 - 1. Non-canonical order placement in the New Testament text
 - 2. Strong literary similarities suggesting direct dependence or shared traditions
- B. The Central Threat: Antinomianism in the Early Church
 - 1. False teachers promoting freedom from moral and ethical responsibility
 - 2. Denial of future judgment to justify carnal and immoral indulgence

II. Second Peter: Defense of Apostolic Teaching and Coming Judgment

- A. Genre and Setting
 - 1. Resembles a last will and testament (2 Peter 1:12–15)
 - 2. Dying hero delivering parting warnings, instructions, and reminders
- B. Core Purpose of 2 Peter
 - 1. Encourage holy living by upholding confidence in Scripture and divine judgment
 - 2. Equal concern for orthodoxy (correct belief) and orthopraxy (correct conduct)
- C. Refutation of False Teachers' Objections
 - 1. Objection 1: Apostles taught cleverly devised myths (2 Peter 1:16–19)
 - a. Refutation: Apostles were eyewitnesses of Christ's glory and majesty
 - b. The Transfiguration as a present snapshot of Christ's future coming in judgment
 - 2. Objection 2: Old Testament prophets were mistaken (2 Peter 1:20–21)

- a. Refutation: Scripture is not a matter of human or private interpretation
 - b. Prophets served as mouthpieces moved directly by the Holy Spirit
- 3. Objection 3: Divine judgment will logically never occur (2 Peter 2:1–22)
 - a. Refutation: Accumulation of historical Old Testament judgment precedents
- 4. Objection 4: Delay of Christ's return proves judgment is false (2 Peter 3:1–10)
 - a. Refutation: Divine perspective on time (a thousand years as a day)
 - b. Delay reflects divine patience granting humanity opportunity for repentance
 - c. Certainty of the Day of the Lord arriving unexpectedly like a thief
- D. Authorship Debates and Early Catholicism
 - 1. Arguments against Petrine authorship (stylistic divergence, genre, early Catholic traits)
 - 2. Defense of Petrine authorship grounded in early church testimony and literary flexibility

III. Jude: Contending for the Faith Against Ungodliness

- A. Authorship and Canonical Inclusion
 - 1. Author identified as Jude, brother of Jesus and James
 - 2. Canonical inclusion supported by familial connection to Jesus and apostolic endorsement
- B. Literary Relationship to 2 Peter
 - 1. Majority consensus: Jude written first, subsequently utilized and expanded by 2 Peter
- C. Purpose and Main Message (Jude 3–4)
 - 1. Shift in course: Urgent call to "contend for the faith once for all entrusted to the saints"
 - 2. Confrontation of itinerant false teachers distorting grace into licentiousness
- D. Use of Old Testament and Extra-Biblical Jewish Traditions
 - 1. Historical judgment of rebellious Israelites following Exodus deliverance (Jude 5)
 - 2. Judgment of fallen angels bound in eternal chains (Jude 6 / Genesis 6 tradition)
 - 3. Judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah for sexual immorality and unnatural lusts (Jude 7)
 - 4. Dispute between Archangel Michael and Satan over Moses' body (Jude 9 / Testament of Moses)
- E. Concluding Call to Ethical Perseverance (Jude 24–25)
 - 1. Praise to God who is able to keep believers from falling away
 - 2. Ultimate promise: Standing blameless and joyful before His glorious presence