

Dr. David Mathewson, New Testament Literature,

Session 32 - 2 Peter and Jude

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Hey, everybody. Welcome back for another deep dive. Excited to be here.

Me too. Yeah. Okay.

So today we're going to be tackling two books of the New Testament that I think often kind of fly under the radar. Yeah. To Peter and Jude.

Yeah, for sure. But don't let their size fool you. These are short letters, but they've had a serious punch.

And we'll be exploring how these early Christians grappled with issues that are surprisingly relevant, even for us today. I mean, we're talking about fake news, moral boundaries, and what it truly means to live a good life. Yeah, all very relevant.

For sure. Yeah. And our guide for this deep dive is a lecture by a New Testament scholar named Dr. Dave Mathewson.

So let's see what we can unearth together. Sounds good. Okay.

So, you know, it sounds like the early church maybe wasn't quite the unified front that we sometimes imagine it to be. Yeah, that's right. You know, Mathewson starts by comparing 2 Peter to some of Paul's letters.

Yeah. You know, explaining that both are addressing threats to this young church. But 2 Peter takes aim at something that's very specific: this group of teachers who are promoting antinomianism.

Can you unpack that a bit for us? I mean, that word's a mouthful. It is a mouthful. Yeah.

Antinomianism essentially means against the law. Okay. And in this context, these teachers were claiming that believers were free from any moral or religious rules.

Oh, wow. Okay. Particularly when it came to sexual behavior.

So basically they were saying, like, rules- what rules? Right. We're free to do whatever we want. Exactly.

I mean, it seems a little convenient, don't you think? What was the reasoning behind this? Well, according to 2 Peter, they were using a rather clever, if not manipulative, tactic. They were claiming that Judgment Day wasn't a real thing. So if there are no eternal consequences, then why bother with moral boundaries? Exactly.

That was their thinking. Wow. That's a pretty bold claim.

So how does 2 Peter address this? I mean, this challenges the core tenets of Christian belief, because the idea of accountability and consequences of our actions- those are pretty central. Oh yeah, absolutely. And 2 Peter takes this threat very seriously.

The letter reads like an urgent plea, almost like a last will and testament, which actually has some interesting implications for how we understand its authorship and authority. Wait, hold on. Are you hinting that Peter might not have actually written this letter? Because Matthewson mentioned something about that.

What's the deal with that? Yeah. So the authorship of 2 Peter is actually a matter of scholarly debate. Okay.

Some scholars argue that the writing style and this testament format point to a later author, someone writing in Peter's name. In fact, this type of pseudonymous writing was fairly common in the ancient world. So that raises all sorts of questions, doesn't it? Yeah.

I mean, if it wasn't actually written by Peter, what does that say about its authority? It's a fascinating question, and it gets to the heart of how the early church was grappling with the transmission of knowledge and authority. How could they ensure the integrity of their message as it spread and evolved over time? Okay, let's get back to the content of 2 Peter for a moment. Matthewson points out that the letter systematically dismantles the false teacher's arguments, kind of like a legal defense.

Yeah. You know, it's almost as though Peter's anticipating their objections and then meticulously refuting them. Exactly.

It's a very structured and persuasive piece of writing. The letter lays out four main objections raised by the false teachers. First, they claim that the apostles' teachings about Jesus' return and the coming judgment were nothing more than fabricated myths.

So basically they're saying, don't believe the hype. Right. What was Peter's response to that? Peter counters this by emphasizing the fact that he was an eyewitness to Jesus' transfiguration.

He reminds his readers that he was there on the mountaintop when Jesus was enveloped in glory, and a voice from heaven declared him to be God's son. He argues that this experience gave him a glimpse of Jesus' future glory and a sure confidence in the reality of the coming judgment. Okay.

So it's a pretty powerful argument, right? He's saying, look, I saw it with my own eyes. This is not some made-up story. Okay.

So what's the next objection that Peter tackles? The false teachers then shifted their attack to the Old Testament prophets. Okay. They argued that the prophets who often spoke of God's judgment were simply mistaken.

Wow. That's a pretty bold claim. I mean, the prophets are a pretty big deal in Jewish and Christian tradition.

Right. So how does Peter address that challenge to their authority? Peter emphasizes the divine inspiration of the prophets. He argues that they weren't simply expressing their own opinions or making predictions.

They were speaking under the direct influence of the Holy Spirit. And therefore, their message of judgment carries the full weight of God's authority. So Peter's saying, don't dismiss the prophets.

They're speaking for God. Exactly. So it's a pretty sophisticated argument that ties together the Old and New Testaments and reinforces the continuity of God's message.

But Matthewson points out that the false teachers didn't stop there. What was their next objection? Well, they went even further, claiming that judgment simply wasn't going to happen. They flat-out denied the possibility.

That's pretty extreme. How in the world did they support that argument? Unfortunately, 2 Peter doesn't provide the specifics of their reasoning. But it does give us a glimpse into Peter's response.

Okay. He turns to the Old Testament and highlights numerous instances where God intervened in history to judge wickedness. Right.

He points to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the flood during Noah's time, and the Israelites' rebellion in the wilderness. All of these are concrete examples of God's judgment in action. This is basically saying, look, God has a track record.

He's done this before, so don't think for a minute that he won't do it again. Right. And those are stories that would have been deeply familiar to his audience, right? Absolutely.

Okay. So even with these examples, the false teachers still had one more objection up their sleeve. What was their final attempt to cast doubt on the idea of judgment? They pointed to the fact that judgment hadn't happened yet, even though the apostles and prophets had spoken about it.

They argued that this delay proved that judgment wasn't coming at all. I mean, that's a clever argument. It plays on people's natural skepticism and, you know, their desire for immediate gratification.

Sure. So how does Peter address this final objection? He counters this by reminding his readers that God's perception of time is different from ours. He famously states that with the Lord, one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day.

He's suggesting that what we might perceive as a delay is actually God's patience at work, giving people more time to repent before judgment arrives. Right. So it's a reminder that we're not operating on the same timeline as God.

Exactly. Right. What we see as a delay might actually be an act of mercy, a chance for people to turn back to him.

Okay. So Peter has systematically addressed all four of the false teacher's objections, making a compelling case for the reality of judgment and the need to live holy lives. But before we move on to Jude, let's circle back to that whole authorship question.

Yeah. You know, it seems like there's some debate about whether Peter actually wrote this letter, and you hinted that this might be connected to the content of the letter itself. Can you elaborate on that a bit? Yeah, of course.

What's intriguing is that the very debate about 2 Peter's authorship mirrors the anxieties about authority and tradition that Peter's addressing in the letter itself. Think about it. If we can't even be sure who wrote this book, how can we be sure that its message is reliable? It raises questions about the chain of transmission and the potential for distortion or fabrication.

Wow. That's fascinating. It's almost like a meta commentary on the whole issue of authority and how we decide what to believe.

Exactly. And this makes Peter's emphasis on eyewitness accounts and the divine inspiration of the prophets even more significant. He's trying to establish a solid foundation for his authority, one that can withstand skepticism and stand the test of time.

So he's not just saying, "Take my word for it because I'm Peter. Right. He's providing evidence, appealing to shared experiences and grounding his arguments in a tradition that his audience would recognize as authoritative.

Exactly. It's a subtle but important distinction. Yeah.

You've hit the nail on the head. He's appealing to reason, experience, and tradition to counter the claims of those who are undermining the core beliefs of the Christian community. This makes me think about how we approach sources of authority in our own lives.

Yeah. How do we decide what to believe? Who do we trust, especially in today's world where we're constantly bombarded with information from all sides? Yeah. It seems like we're facing a similar challenge to those early Christians who were trying to navigate a world of competing claims and ideologies.

That's a great observation. And I think both 2 Peter and Jude offer us some valuable insights for navigating these challenges. They remind us to be discerning, to critically evaluate the information we encounter, and to be wary of those who might be twisting the truth for their own gain.

They also encourage us to ground ourselves in reliable sources of authority, whether that's scripture, tradition, or the wisdom of trusted mentors and communities. It sounds like these ancient texts are offering a blueprint for navigating the complexities of faith, truth, and morality in a world that can often feel chaotic and confusing. Okay, so we've spent quite a bit of time unpacking 2 Peter and its response to this early form of fake news.

But what about Jude? Matthewson mentions that it's a short but powerful letter penned by, wait for it, one of Jesus's brothers. That's right. Have you ever heard a sermon on Jude? To be honest, sermons on Jude are pretty rare.

Yeah. But despite its brevity, this little book packs a powerful punch, tackling that same antinomianism we saw in 2 Peter. Right.

It's all about contending for the faith. Not just believing the right things, but living the right way. So Jude is also concerned with this idea of people twisting the message of freedom in Christ to justify a life of unrestrained indulgence.

Right. But how does he approach this issue? Does he use similar strategies to Peter? Well, while both letters address the same problem, Jude uses slightly different tactics and draws on a wider range of sources to make his case. Like Peter, he counters the false teachers by drawing on vivid Old Testament stories.

Okay. He reminds his readers of the Israelites who were miraculously saved from slavery in Egypt, but then perished in the wilderness because of their unbelief and rebellion. That's a stark reminder that even experiencing God's saving power doesn't guarantee a life of faithfulness.

That's right. Right. It highlights the ongoing struggle to live in obedience and trust even after experiencing deliverance.

That's right. And Jude doesn't shy away from using powerful imagery to drive home his point. No, he doesn't.

He also brings up the story of Sodom and Gomorrah, cities destroyed by God because of their rampant sexual immorality. The message is clear. God judges sin, and those who persist in it will face consequences.

Right. But there's one story in Jude that's particularly strange. It's not even found in the Bible.

Right. He writes about the archangel Michael battling Satan over the body of Moses. Yeah.

It's wild. What's the story there? That story comes from a non-canonical Jewish text called the Testament of Moses. It was a popular work in Jewish circles at the time, and Jude's audience would likely have been familiar with it.

He's drawing on a broader Jewish tradition to make his point. Yeah. That's fascinating, but why do you think he chose to include this particular story, especially since it's not from the Bible? It's a great question.

What's intriguing here is that Jude is deliberately expanding his sources of authority. He's not limiting himself to the canonical scriptures, but drawing on a wider body of tradition to support his arguments. This raises some interesting questions for us, doesn't it? What sources of authority do we rely on today? How do we decide what to trust? Yeah.

Especially in a world flooded with information. You've hit on a really important point. It seems like Jude is wrestling with the same challenges we face today.

How do we discern truth from falsehood? That's right. How do we navigate a world of competing claims and ideologies? Exactly. And I think that's one of the key takeaways from both 2 Peter and Jude.

Okay. They offer us a model for engaging with these challenges, for thinking critically about the sources of our beliefs, and for living lives of integrity and faithfulness in a world that can often feel very uncertain. So we've got these two texts, both tackling the dangers of antinomianism, both emphasizing the need for holy living, and both grappling with the question of authority in a rapidly changing world.

It's amazing how these seemingly obscure texts can speak so directly to our own lives and challenges. It really is remarkable that they offer a timeless wisdom that transcends the centuries and speaks to the deepest longings of the human heart. They remind us that true faith is not just about intellectual assent or blind obedience.

It's about a lived reality that transforms us from the inside out. And that transformation is not just about personal piety. It's about engaging with the world around us, discerning truth from falsehood, and standing firm in our convictions.

Precisely. They call us to be active participants in the ongoing struggle for truth, justice, and righteousness, both within ourselves and in the world around us. This is all making me think about how we often compartmentalize our faith, you know, keeping it separate from the messy realities of everyday life.

But 2 Peter and Jude seem to suggest that true faith is not something that we can simply relegate to Sundays or private devotions. It's a force that should permeate every aspect of our lives, shaping our choices, our relationships, and our engagement with the world. You've captured it perfectly.

These letters are a call to integrate our faith with our actions, to live out our beliefs in a way that makes a tangible difference in the world. And that integration requires discernment, courage, and a willingness to stand up for what we believe in, even when it's unpopular or challenging. It's a call to be salt and light in a world that desperately needs both.

Indeed, these letters are a powerful reminder that authentic faith is not passive or complacent. It's active, engaged, and transformative. Okay, we've covered a lot of ground in this first part of our deep dive into 2 Peter and Jude.

We've explored how these early Christians were wrestling with issues that are surprisingly relevant for us today, like fake news, moral boundaries, and the very nature of truth itself. We've also unpacked the debate surrounding the authorship of 2 Peter and how that connects to the letters' own concerns about authority and tradition. But there's still so much more to uncover.

In the next part of our deep dive, we'll delve deeper into Jude's unique arguments and explore how both letters offer practical guidance for navigating the complexities of faith and

life in the 21st century. I'm excited to continue this journey with you. Me too! We'll be back soon with part two of our deep dive into 2 Peter and Jude.

Stay tuned. Welcome back to our deep dive into 2 Peter and Jude. Last time, we were exploring how these early Christians were wrestling with challenges that feel surprisingly modern, you know, fake news, moral relativism, and figuring out who to trust in a world of competing voices.

We left off talking about Jude's fascinating use of sources outside the traditional Hebrew Bible to make his case. It got me thinking: what other tools does Jude use to persuade his audience? I mean, this letter is short and to the point, so every word must count. Yeah, you're absolutely right.

Jude is a master of concise and impactful writing. One of the things that stands out is his use of vivid imagery and almost apocalyptic language. He doesn't just tell his readers about the consequences of following these false teachers; he paints a picture with words.

Okay, so give us an example. What kind of imagery does he use? Well, think back to that story he uses about the Israelites wandering in the wilderness. Okay.

He describes them as grumbling, complaining, and rebelling. Right. He then compares them to wandering stars destined for a place of utter darkness.

Powerful stuff. Yeah, it's almost like a glimpse into hell, right? The sense of being lost in a drift and heading towards destruction. Definitely not a subtle message.

Exactly. Jude wants his readers to viscerally understand the stakes involved in choosing to follow these false teachers. He's not just appealing to their intellect; he's engaging their emotions and their imaginations.

It makes me think about how we often try to separate faith and reason, but Jude seems to be suggesting that they're deeply intertwined. Yeah. He's appealing to both the head and the heart, wouldn't you say? Absolutely.

And this is something we see throughout both 2 Peter and Jude. Right. They're not just presenting dry theological arguments; they're engaging with the whole person, their experiences, their fears, their hopes, and their aspirations.

Yeah, and they're doing it within a specific historical context. These letters weren't written in a vacuum. They were addressed to real people grappling with real challenges.

Matthewson mentioned that, you know, understanding this context is crucial to understanding the messages of these letters. Oh, sure. Can you unpack that a bit for us? Of course.

Remember that the early Christian communities were relatively small and vulnerable. They faced persecution from both Roman authorities and Jewish leaders. They were also navigating a complex religious and cultural landscape, trying to figure out how to live out their faith in a world that didn't always share their values.

Yeah, so there's a sense of urgency and even a bit of defensiveness in these letters, right? These authors weren't just engaged in abstract theological debates. They were fighting to preserve the integrity of their faith and protect their communities from those who were trying to lead them astray. It's like they're saying, hey, this is serious stuff.

We're not just talking about ideas here. We're talking about the very foundations of our faith and the way we live our lives. Right.

It makes their message even more powerful, don't you think? I completely agree. And this sense of urgency makes their arguments all the more compelling. They're not just armchair theologians.

They're pastors, leaders, and even family members who are deeply invested in the well-being of their communities. It makes me think about how we sometimes approach scripture as this ancient, almost irrelevant text. But these letters remind us that the Bible was written by real people grappling with real challenges that are often not that different from our own.

That's such an important point. Yeah. And it's one of the reasons why these shorter, less studied books can be so illuminating.

Yeah. They give us a glimpse into the lived experiences of early Christians and offer a model for how to navigate the complexities of faith and life in a world that's not always friendly or welcoming. Speaking of navigating complexity, let's circle back to this idea of discernment that we've been touching on.

Sure. It seems like both 2 Peter and Jude are urging their readers to develop a critical eye to not just accept anything they hear at face value. Yeah.

How does that play out in these letters? Are they giving their readers specific tools for discerning truth from falsehood? That's a great question. They don't necessarily lay out a step-by-step process, but they do offer some guiding principles. First and foremost, they emphasize the importance of grounding oneself in the truth that has been passed down through the apostles and prophets.

Okay. They see this tradition as a bulwark against the ever-present danger of false teaching. So it's not about rejecting all new ideas or perspectives.

It's about having a solid foundation to measure them against the right. Exactly. They're not advocating blind faith or an unquestioning acceptance of tradition.

They're encouraging their readers to be thoughtful and discerning to test everything against the truth they've received. Yeah. It makes me think about how we're often bombarded with information these days, especially online.

Right. It can be really difficult to sort through all the noise and figure out what's true, what's reliable, and what's just plain misleading. It's a challenge that's only intensified in the digital age.

And I think both Second Peter and Jude offer us some timeless wisdom for navigating this information overload. Okay. They remind us to be critical of sources, to be aware of our own biases, and to seek out wisdom from trusted mentors and communities.

So it's not just about having the right information. It's about having the right filters, the right lenses through which to view the world. It's about cultivating a posture of discernment and a willingness to grapple with complexity.

You've hit the nail on the head. And I think this is one of the most valuable lessons we can learn from these letters. Yeah.

They remind us that the pursuit of truth is an ongoing process, one that requires humility, openness, and a willingness to engage with challenging ideas. And it's a process that's best undertaken in community, right? We're not meant to do this alone. Right.

We need each other to help us sift through the noise, to challenge our assumptions, and to encourage us to stay on the path of truth and righteousness. Absolutely. Both Second Peter and Jude emphasize the importance of community, of supporting one another in the faith, and of standing together against those who would seek to undermine the truth.

So you've got this fascinating interplay between personal discernment and communal accountability. Right. These two elements work together to create a kind of checks-and-balances system that helps us stay grounded in truth and avoid getting swept away by false teachings or harmful ideologies.

That's a great way to put it. It's a reminder that the Christian life is not a solo act. It's a journey we're meant to take together, supporting and encouraging one another along the way.

And part of that journey involves wrestling with difficult questions. Yes. Challenging our assumptions and being willing to change our minds when presented with new evidence or perspectives.

It's not about being rigid or dogmatic. It's about being open to growth and transformation. Exactly.

And I think that's what makes these letters so relevant for us today. They remind us that true faith is not about having all the answers. It's about being willing to ask the hard questions, to engage in honest dialogue, and to trust that God is with us, even in the midst of our doubts and uncertainties.

This has been a really thought-provoking discussion so far. We've covered so much ground. From the specific challenges facing the early church to the timeless principles of discernment, community, and the pursuit of truth.

But there's one more piece of the puzzle that I want to explore before we wrap up this deep dive. How do these letters challenge us to live differently? What are the practical implications of their message for our everyday lives? That's a great question to ponder as we move into the final part of our deep dive. Stay tuned.

All right. So welcome back to the final part of our deep dive into 2 Peter and Jude. Yeah.

Excited to be here. Yeah, me too. You know, we've been exploring how these short but powerful letters speak to some like timeless challenges.

How to spot fake news, how to live with integrity when it feels like everything's up for grabs, and how to build a life of meaning in a world that often feels kind of chaotic. For sure. And in this last section, I really want to dig into how these letters challenge us to put our faith into action.

You know how they move us beyond just believing the right things to actually living the right way? Absolutely. You know, it's that classic idea of faith without works being dead. That's right.

And Matthew Essin pointed out that both 2 Peter and Jude seem particularly concerned with this idea of aligning our actions with our beliefs. What does that look like in practice? What are some concrete examples from these letters? Well, one of the most striking things about both letters is their emphasis on holiness. They repeatedly call their readers to live pure and blameless lives set apart from the corrupting influences of the world.

For Peter, this means cultivating qualities like self-control, perseverance, and godliness. Jude, on the other hand, uses more stark imagery, urging his readers to hate the clothing stained by corrupted flesh. Whoa.

OK, that's a pretty intense image. It is, yeah. It seems like Jude is really trying to drive home the point that our actions have consequences, that we can't just compartmentalize our faith and then live however we want the rest of the time.

Exactly. He's calling for a radical commitment to purity, turning away from anything that might defile or compromise our relationship with God. Yeah, it makes me think about how, you know, we often talk about grace and forgiveness, but sometimes we forget about the importance of striving for holiness.

Yeah. It's like these letters are reminding us that grace isn't a free pass to do whatever we want. It's a transformative power that enables us to live differently.

That's a great way to put it. It's not about earning God's favor through our good works. It's about allowing His grace to shape our desires, our choices, and our actions.

So holiness is one key theme that emerges from these letters. For sure. What other practical implications can we glean from their message? Well, both letters emphasize the importance of love and compassion, especially towards those within the Christian community.

Peter urges his readers to make every effort to add to your faith goodness and to goodness knowledge and to knowledge self-control and to self-control perseverance and to perseverance godliness and to godliness mutual affection and to mutual affection love. He sees these virtues as interconnected, building upon one another and culminating in a love that embraces all believers. It's like a beautiful recipe for spiritual growth, isn't it? Right.

Each ingredient adds a layer of flavor and richness to the final product. Exactly. And Jude echoes the sentiment, calling his readers to show mercy to those who doubt, save others by snatching them from the fire, and to others show mercy mixed with fear, hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh.

Even in his strong condemnation of the false teachers, he emphasizes the need for compassion and a desire to see others restored to fellowship. So it's not about creating an exclusive club where only the perfect are welcome. It's about extending grace and mercy to those who are struggling, doubting, or even straying from the path.

Precisely. And this call to love and compassion extends even to those outside the Christian community. Yeah.

Both letters remind us that we are called to be salt and light in the world, to live in a way that reflects God's love and truth to those around us. It's about more than just avoiding bad behavior or sticking to a set of rules. It's about actively embodying God's love and grace in the world.

It's about being a force for good, a beacon of hope in a world that often feels dark and despairing. Yes. And it's a call to action that resonates just as strongly today as it did in the first century.

We're still called to be agents of reconciliation, to shine God's light in dark places, and to live in a way that draws others to Him. Yeah. These letters offer such a powerful reminder that our faith is not just about what we believe, but it's about how we live.

That's right. It's about the choices we make, the words we speak, and the actions we take. It's about aligning our lives with God's will and allowing His transforming grace to work in and through us.

And it's a journey that requires ongoing discernment, a commitment to holiness, and a deep love for both God and our fellow human beings. So as we wrap up this deep dive into 2 Peter and Jude, what's one final thought-provoking takeaway you'd like to leave our listeners with? Well, both of these letters end with a reminder of the hope we have in Christ, the hope of His return, and the hope of a world made new. They challenge us to live in light of that hope, to persevere in the face of adversity, and to never lose sight of the eternal perspective that informs and inspires our actions.

It's a powerful reminder that our lives here and now have eternal significance. The choices we make, the way we live, and the impact we have on others all matter in the grand scheme of things. Indeed.

And these seemingly obscure letters offer a timeless guide for navigating the complexities of faith and life in a way that honors God, blesses others, and leaves a lasting legacy of love and hope. Awesome. Well, thanks for joining us on this deep dive into 2 Peter and Jude.

We hope you've gained a new appreciation for these powerful texts and the enduring relevance of their message. Until next time, keep seeking truth, keep loving well, and keep living out your faith in a way that makes a difference in the world.