

Why 2 Peter and Jude are Similar and What Jude Says about *Authority*

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I INTRODUCTION

Commentaries assume that Jude talks about false teachers because it's similar to 2 Peter. However, Jude nowhere mentions false teachers. Still, their similarity cannot be coincidental, so how are they related? The commonality between the two is that 2 Peter talks about false teachers, while Jude discusses their followers. This is evident by what Jude says and what the Bible teaches about false teachers/prophets. They did not originate with 2 Peter. The Old Testament, our Lord, and all the apostles warned about them and their followers. As one looks at what Jude says about *authority*, it is clear that those who follow false teaching are alive and well.

II WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN 2 PETER AND JUDE?

A. The Similarity Between Jude 4-18 and 2 Peter 2:1 – 3:3

Jude 4-18	2 Peter 2:1 - 3:3
<p>⁴ For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.</p> <p>⁵ But I want to remind you, though you once knew this, that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe.</p> <p>⁶ And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day;</p> <p>⁷ as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.</p>	<p>^{2:1} But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, <i>and</i> bring on themselves swift destruction.</p> <p>² And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed.</p> <p>³ By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber.</p> <p>⁴ For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast <i>them</i> down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment;</p> <p>⁵ and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, <i>one of eight people</i>, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly;</p> <p>⁶ and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned <i>them</i> to destruction, making <i>them</i> an example to those who afterward would live ungodly;</p> <p>⁷ and delivered righteous Lot, <i>who was</i> oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked</p> <p>⁸ (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented <i>his</i> righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing <i>their</i> lawless deeds) --</p> <p>⁹ <i>then</i> the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment,</p>

⁸ Likewise also these dreamers defile the flesh, **reject authority**, and **speak evil of dignitaries**.

⁹ Yet **Michael the archangel**, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, **dared not bring against him a reviling accusation**, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!"

¹⁰ But these **speak evil of whatever they do not know**; and whatever they know **naturally, like brute beasts**, in these things **they corrupt themselves**.

¹¹ Woe to them! For they have **gone in the way of Cain**, have run greedily in the error of **Balaam for profit**, and perished in the rebellion of Korah.

¹² **These are spots in your love feasts, while they feast with you** without fear, serving *only* themselves. **They are clouds without water, carried about by the winds**; late autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, pulled up by the roots;

¹³ raging waves of the sea, foaming up their own shame; wandering stars **for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever**.

¹⁴ Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints,

¹⁵ "to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him."

¹⁶ These are grumblers, complainers, walking according to their own lusts; and **they mouth great swelling words**, **flattering people to gain advantage**. **-see 2 Peter 2:3 above**

¹⁷ But you, beloved, **remember the words which were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ**:

¹⁸ how they told you that there would be **mockers in the last time who would walk according to their own ungodly lusts**.

¹⁰ and especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and **despise authority**. *They are* presumptuous, self-willed. They are not afraid to **speak evil of dignitaries**,

¹¹ whereas **angels**, who are greater in power and might, **do not bring a reviling accusation against them** before the Lord.

¹² But these, **like natural brute beasts** made to be caught and destroyed, **speak evil of the things they do not understand**, and will **utterly perish in their own corruption**,

¹³ and will receive the wages of unrighteousness, as those who count it pleasure to carouse in the daytime. **They are spots and blemishes**, carousing in their own deceptions **while they feast with you**,

¹⁴ having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls. *They have* a heart trained in covetous practices, and are accursed children.

¹⁵ They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, **following the way of Balaam the son of Beor**, who loved the **wages of unrighteousness**;

¹⁶ but he was rebuked for his iniquity: a dumb donkey speaking with a man's voice restrained the madness of the prophet.

¹⁷ These are **wells without water, clouds carried by a tempest, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever**.

¹⁸ For when **they speak great swelling words** of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error.

¹⁹ While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage.

²⁰ For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning.

²¹ For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known *it*, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them.

²² But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: "A dog returns to his own vomit," and, "a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire."

^{3:1} Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in *both of* which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder),

² that you may **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 knowing this first: that **scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts**,

B. 2 Peter Talks about False Teachers and Jude Their Followers

Some think that Jude is about false teachers and defending the gospel due to its similarity with 2 Peter. However, this interpretation has three problems: (1) Jude nowhere mentions false teachers, false teaching, or the Gospel, (2) Jude vv. 17-18 indicates that the warning about *mockers who walk according to their own ungodly lusts* came from all the apostles not just Peter. And the warning is not about false teachers specifically, it's about those who behave like them. Additionally, the Bible reveals that warnings about false teachers goes back to the Old Testament, our Lord's teaching, and the teaching of all the apostles. Those warnings describe the false teachers, their behavior, and those who would follow them,¹ (3) if Jude's topic was in fact false teachers, he would have written a different letter, one that would have highlighted and detailed the serious problem of elders teaching false doctrine or allowing such to be taught in their church.

III WHAT DOES JUDE SAY ABOUT *AUTHORITY*

A. The Outline of Jude's Argument

- I. Jude's Address and Greeting (vv. 1-2)
- II. Jude Urges His Audience to Contend for the Faith and Tells Them Why (vv. 3-19)
 - A. Jude's Audience Must Contend for the Faith (v. 3)
 - B. Jude Identifies the Reason why they Must Contend for the Faith: Godless men who reject the Lord's authority have crept in (vv. 4-13)
 1. Jude Identifies the Problem: godless men who are marked for judgment have crept in (v. 4)
 2. Two Examples of Other Godless Individuals who Were and Will be Judged by the Lord (vv. 5-8)
 3. A Contrast Between a Godly Individual and the Godless (vv. 8-10)
 4. Jude Pronounces Woe on the Godless Ones for Pursuing the Path of Other Godless Individuals (v. 11)
 5. The Leaders of this Flock Must Judge the Godless Ones because They Threaten the Flock and are Thoroughly Corrupt (vv. 12-13)
 - C. The Lord will Judge the Godless Ones in the Future (vv. 14-15)
 - D. Further Reason for Judging the Godless Ones: They are Grumblers who walk by the flesh and Fleece the Flock through Flattery (v. 16)
 - E. Jude Reminds them of the Previous Warning they Received from the Apostles about these Godless Ones (vv. 17-18)
 - F. A Further threat to the Flock: the Godless Ones cause Divisions (v. 19)
- III. Contrary to the Godless ones, Jude's Audience Must Remain Faithful to the Lord and Rescue those who've Followed their Path (vv. 20-23)
- IV. Jude's Closing Statement (vv. 24-25)

¹ See, *A Brief Look at False Teachers/Prophets in the Bible*, at the end of these notes.

B. Authority in Jude

Almost every verse in Jude's letter relates to the subject of *authority*.

1:1, Jude recognizes Christ's authority by identifying himself as His bondservant.

1:3, the leadership of this flock must exercise their authority on the godless ones.

1:4, the godless deny the Lord's authority and are thus set aside for judgment.

1:5-8, two examples of other godless ones who rejected the Lord's authority:

(1) Those the Lord delivered from land of Egypt (Num. 13-14)

(2) Fallen angels who intermarry with humans (Gen 6:1-5).

1:8-10, Michael, the archangel, who refused to *blaspheme* when he rebuked Satan, is contrasted with the godless ones who *blaspheme*, even what they don't know. It's OK to rebuke evil behavior, but not sinfully, Mtt. 5:21-22; Col. 3:8.

1:11, Jude compares the godless ones to others who rejected the Lord's authority:

Cain (Gen 4:1-9)

Balaam (Num. 22:4-22)

Korah (Num. 16:1-35).

1:12-13, more reasons for the leaders of this flock to exercise their authority.

1:14-15, the Lord will exercise His authority on the godless ones in the future.

1:16, further reasons for the leaders of the flock to exercise their authority.

1:19, more reasons for the leaders of the flock to exercise their authority.

1:20-21, contrary to the evildoers, the leadership and the flock must recognize the Lord's authority by remaining faithful to Him.

1:22-23, even more reasons for the leaders of the flock to exercise their authority.

1:24-25, Jude again recognizes the Lord's authority by acknowledging His wisdom, power, and majesty, and thus His ability to keep believers from stumbling.

C. Why is it Important to Know the Difference between 2 Peter and Jude?

If you accept the commentaries' interpretation of Jude, then you will apply Jude's message a very specific way. You will think that Jude (i.e., God—it is His Word) is telling you to debate every unbeliever (or believer) you witness to because your job is to defend the Gospel. What will such behavior result in; will you win souls to Christ or become a pariah among the unbelievers you know?

God's Word says of itself that it is alive and powerful (Heb. 4:12). So if this is Jude's message, then it should work. Do you think that debating with the unbeliever about the Gospel will persuade him/her? The apologetics book *When Skeptics Ask* (p. 12) even went on to say that Jude 22 instructs us to have mercy on the unbeliever who is doubting. What about Jude 23, which is the second part of Jude 22? Since it basically says to forcibly yank them out of the fire, does it give you permission to yell and scream at the more belligerent unbeliever? Is this the way God expects us to witness to the unbeliever? Not likely.

Why won't this tactic work with the unbeliever? Because that's not God's message in Jude; that's man's wrong interpretation of God's message. The Bible says that God's Word is alive and powerful, not man's wrong interpretation of It. So the first reason to differentiate between 2 Peter and Jude is so that you actually apply what God says in Jude and not someone's wrong interpretation.

The second reason is that if you fail to understand Jude's message, then you will lack the tools Jude provides you to deal with the situation he describes. He gives you the ability to quickly identify followers of false teaching by giving you a long list of their characteristics and behaviors. And whether you're part of the leadership or the flock, he tells you how to handle both the perpetrators and the victims in this situation.

Regarding the perpetrators, if you're in a leadership position, Jude is screaming at you to execute judgment on the evil doers among you in order to protect your flock. Regarding the sheep that have become their victims, Jude tells you to rescue them discerningly, some (who don't know better—immature) will need a soft touch, others (who ought to know better—mature) will require a very firm hand. If you're part of the flock, you may not be able to execute judgment as a leader, but you can defend and even rescue your fellow sheep from the evil doers. At the very least you're equipped to recognize and report the situation to the leadership.

But if you have the wrong interpretation of Jude, you will miss all of this because you thought Jude was about false teachers and defending the Gospel.

IV CONCLUSION

It is extremely important to know what every portion of God's Word says. We must properly understand God's message so that we can accurately apply it and be properly equipped to deal with the situations God warns us about. Although Jude and 2 Peter may be similar, they have a vastly different message. Each has its purpose. If we fail to understand this, then we will be lacking a vital part of God's Word.

A Brief Look at False Teachers/Prophets in the Bible

Old Testament

It may seem an unlikely place to start, but in order to see what the Bible says about false teachers/Prophets, one must begin with man's tendency to lie. In Exodus 20:16, God gives the 9th Commandment: *You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor*. Why does God give this commandment, is it because man will not lie? No, it's because he will; he has this tendency.

Although the 9th commandment deals with legal proceedings (e.g., lying in a courtroom), it shows that man has this tendency. One example of this is Cain, Gen 4:3-9. What was Cain's response to God after he'd murdered his brother Able? *Am I my brother's keeper?* He knew that what he did was wrong, so he lied to God.

We see the tendency to lie in the nation of Israel. In Psalm 78 the psalmist recounts the wondrous things the Lord did for Israel after delivering them from Egypt and how they rebelled against Him. And when God slew them for their rebellion, then Israel *remembered that God was their rock, 78:35*. But even then they *flattered Him with their mouth, and they lied to Him with their tongue; for their heart was not steadfast with Him, nor were they faithful in His covenant, 78:36-37*. God provided marvelously for Israel in the wilderness, but they spoke falsehoods and forsook His Covenant.

Next we look at the prophets of this nation. In Jeremiah 14:11-15 we see that Israel had false prophets among them. Here God tells Jeremiah not to pray for Israel for He *will consume them by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence, 14:12*, for their idolatry. But then Jeremiah tells God that Israel's prophets say that Israel will not see the sword or famine, 14:13. God responds, *the prophets prophesy lies in My name. I have not sent them, commanded them, nor spoken to them; they prophesy to you a false vision, divination, a worthless thing, and the deceit of their heart, 14:14*. These false prophets teach lies concerning God's Word, so (like the false teachers in 2 Peter 2:12 and the mockers in Jude 13 and 15) God will destroy them via their own corruption: *by sword and famine those prophets shall be consumed!, 14:15*.

In Ezekiel 34:1-6, God speaks against the entire leadership of Israel, which includes false prophets; He addresses them as *shepherds*.² And what do we learn about false prophets from this passage? They are (like those in 2 Peter 2:3 and the mockers in Jude 12 and 16) utterly selfish individuals who feed on the sheep, 34:3-4.

² Though He addresses *shepherds*, it includes the false prophets that led the people astray. That false prophets were also considered Israel's shepherds is clear from Zechariah 10:2-3.

New Testament

What does the New Testament have to say about false teachers/prophets? Our Lord warned about them in Matthew 7:15-16. Instead of this passage being a test to know whom real believers are, it's a test to know whom false prophets are.³ And what is that test? We shall know false prophets by their fruits, i.e., what they produce, which includes both their deeds and their offspring (followers). Note too that they are *ravenous wolves*, 7:15. Does this behavior sound familiar? In Matthew 16:6 and 12, the Lord warns about the false teachers' teaching. He's addressing Pharisees and Sadducees, who were the teachers of Israel.⁴ In Matthew 23:14-15, the Lord reveals the characteristics of the false teachers in Israel and their desire to have followers. They are pretentious individuals who take advantage of widows and seek to ensnare others in their evil ways, 23:14-15. Does this sound like those in 2 Peter and the mockers in Jude? Our Lord also said, *many false prophets will rise up and deceive many*, Matthew 24:11, i.e., they will have followers.

What about the apostles, did they warn us about false teachers/prophets? Paul did, 2 Corinthians 11:1-4. Speaking to the Corinthians, Paul warns them about preachers who would preach to them *another Jesus*, 11:4. But he assures them that such individuals are *false apostles*, 11:13, who will perish in their own corruption, 11:15. Paul warns of them in 1 Timothy 4:1-2 and says that this is actually the Spirit's warning that *in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron*. Paul mentions their offspring in 2 Timothy 3:1-10, saying *in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good,* Does this behavior sound familiar? And recall that Jude said that the warning about mockers came from all the apostles of the Lord, v. 17. Some of these *boasters* and *blasphemers* have crept into the flock Jude's addressing.

The apostle John warns about false prophets and confirms that many were present during his time, 1John 4:1.

What about the apostle Peter's warning? One of the main characteristics of false teachers/prophets is that they lie about God's Word. This is evident in the false teachers Peter describes; they even taught to deny Christ, 2:1. And as we look at the characteristics Peter describes, they are like those found in the Old Testament and the ones the Lord warned about. They are utterly selfish individuals who feed on the sheep, 2:3. They walk by the flesh and reject authority, 2:10. And they will likewise perish in their own corruption, 2:12. We also see that they have offspring, 2:2, and fight hard to convert them, 2:18.

³ The Lord didn't say, *you will know believers by their fruits*. He said, *you will know false prophets by their fruits*. His audience is comprised of His disciples and the people around them, all of whom are Jewish, 5:1-2. Since they are Jewish, they would never interpret *false prophets* to mean *believers*—they wouldn't have a clue what this word meant. Rather, they would immediately think of the false prophets spoken of in their Scriptures (Old Testament), like the ones we've been discussing.

⁴ False teachers and prophets are in many ways one and the same. They both teach God's Word to the people, one teaches God's spoken Word (or Word revealed through visions/dreams) and the other God's written Word.

When we come to Jude's alarming warning about wicked mockers, we see the same behavior. These mockers deny Christ, 4, are utterly selfish and feed on the flock, 12, 16, reject authority and walk by the flesh, 8, 16. They also will perish by their own corruption, 13, 15.

Thus, the evidence of Scripture shows that false teachers/prophets did not originate with Peter's warning. False teachers/prophets (their character, behavior, followers, and ultimate demise) were known from the teaching of the Old Testament, the Lord's warnings, and the warnings of all the apostles.

And the warnings reveal that they are utterly selfish individuals who feed on the sheep, reject authority, live according to their desires/lusts, seek to ensnare others into their evil ways, and will ultimately perish in their own corruption. 2 Peter talks about them specifically and Jude talks about their offspring.