

2 Peter and Jude

The Problem of Apostasy

By John Edmiston

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It is recommended that you use a good study Bible along with these notes.



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Study One – Introduction and Theological Issues

1. Read 2 Peter 1:1, Jude 1:1, James 1:1, Matthew 10:2-3, Matthew 13:55 and Galatians 1:19 – who are the authors? Why does Jude call himself “the brother of James”? Both epistles seem to have been written about AD 64, just before Peter’s execution (2 Peter 1:14) and before the fall of Jerusalem (AD 66-70).
2. There are a large number of references to the Old Testament, and even to the book of Enoch, as if they expected their readers to be familiar with them, do you think they were mainly writing to Jews (possibly in Dispersion) or to Gentiles? Were Peter and Jude focused on Jews or Gentiles during their ministry? (Galatians 2:9)
3. Can Christians fall away from the faith? Or just false Christians or not fully converted Christians? What is the problem of apostasy? (2 Thessalonians 2:3, 2 Peter 2:15, 2:20-22, 3:16,17; Jude 1:5-7, 22-23, John 10:28-30,16:1)
4. Read Jude 1:14 - How can Jude quote from the book of Enoch when the book is clearly not canonical Scripture? How can Paul quote Greek poets (Acts 17:28) and philosophers (Titus 1:12)? How does Peter view the writings of Paul? (2 Peter 3:15,16)
5. Enoch is said to have “prophesied”. Do you think Jude saw Enoch as a genuine prophet? On the other hand, how can someone who is not a prophet give a prophecy? (John 11:49-52)
6. What are some of the characteristics of false teachers? (2 Peter 2:1-3, 2:12-19, Jude 1:4, 1:10-16)
7. Is there any such thing as standard Christian doctrine? (Jude 1:3)
8. How are Christians endangered by false teaching? Why is this such an urgent issue for Peter and Jude? (2 Peter 2:18-22, 2 Peter 3:16,17)
9. How does teaching on the Second Coming purify believer’s minds and deliver them from the effects of false teaching? (2 Peter 3:7-15, Jude 1:14,15)

Study Two – 2 Peter Chapter One

1. Read 2 Peter 1:1, Peter introduces himself as an apostle and a servant of God and then says of his hearers: “To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ” How do Christians have a faith of equal standing with the apostles?
2. Read 2 Peter 1:2 and John 17:3 Here Christian growth is guaranteed through “epignosis” which is the practical experiential knowledge of God (as opposed to merely theoretical knowledge). How can Christians get to know God in the midst of life by exercising their faith? How have you come to know the Lord better?
3. Read 2 Peter 1:3,4 How does the knowledge of “Him who called us” and especially of his “precious and very great promises” equip us to live a faithful Christian life?
4. What does it mean for us to become a partaker of the divine nature? (2 Peter 1:4, Ephesians 3:14-21)
5. Read 2 Peter 1:5-8 what qualities are Christians to acquire by grace in order to become partakers of the divine nature? How do they relate to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ?
6. Read 2 Peter 1:9-11 Why do we have to make our calling and election sure? How do these qualities guarantee us an entrance into God’s eternal Kingdom? Is there a possibility that we might fail by being blind and short-sighted in spiritual things?
7. Why is the apostle Peter writing this epistle? (2 Peter 1:12-15)
8. Read 2 Peter 1:16-18, Luke 9:28-36 How important was the Transfiguration to Peter? What effect did it have on him? How can a mountain be holy?
9. Read 2 Peter 1:19-21 What is the Apostle Peter’s view of Scripture and of the inspiration and proper interpretation of Scripture?

Study Three – 2 Peter Chapter Two

1. What is the apostle Peter's view of "alternative theologies" that preach sensuality and sexual liberation? (2 Peter 2:1-3) Does it matter if they are "sincere" in their false teaching?
2. Read 2 Peter 2:3-6,12,13,17 What is God going to do to the false teachers?
3. "For God did not spare angels when they sinned" (2 Peter 2:4) How is this a warning to unrepentant licentious Christians?
4. How does God's judgment distinguish between the wicked and the godly? (2 Peter 2:4-9)
5. Read 2 Peter 2:10-12 – the false teachers were blaspheming against spiritual beings of great might and majesty. Why should we take blasphemy seriously?
6. Greed, adultery and enticement are part and parcel of certain cults (2 Peter 2:13-14). How do cult leaders exploit their gullible followers?
7. Read 2 Peter 2:15,16 How is Balaam an example of a spiritual leader going wrong because of the love of money? (see also Numbers chapters 22-24)
8. Some Christian believers are fairly marginal in their faith and commitment to Christ and these are captured by the false teachers (2 Peter 2:17-19). What are the tricks of the trade that the false teachers use to deceive them? What is true spiritual freedom?
9. Read 2 Peter 2:20-22 What is the judgement for those who fully abandon Christianity and return to their sin and to the sensual lifestyles advocated by the false teachers?

Study Four – 2 Peter Chapter Three

1. Read 2 Peter 3:1,2 Why does the apostle Peter call his readers “beloved”? What does Peter say he is trying to do in this epistle?
2. Read 2 Peter 3:3,4 It is only 64AD and there are already “scoffers” of the Lord’s Coming at work! Why were they scoffing? What did their sinful desires have to do with it?
3. What fact were the scoffers overlooking? (2 Peter 3:5,6) How do people forget divine history when it is morally inconvenient for them to bring it to mind?
4. How is God going to finally judge the world? (2 Peter 3:7,10-12)
5. Read 2 Peter 3:8 What does this verse tell us about God’s prophetic timetable? (see Acts 1:6,7)
6. How does the patience of God lead us to salvation? (Romans 2:4, 2 Peter 3:9,15) Does God predestine salvation so that most people will go to Hell?
7. Read 2 Peter 3:10-12 The Creation is transient! How do these verses assist us in setting correct Christian priorities? How do we hasten the coming of the Lord? (Matthew 24:14)
8. What are Christians waiting for and how should this affect our Christian lifestyle? (2 Peter 2:13,14)
9. Peter summarizes his epistle in 2 Peter 3:15-18; what does he want his hearers to do? What does he want them to be careful about? How does Peter now feel about the apostle Paul, even after they clashed in Antioch? (Galatians 2:11-14)

Study Five - Jude Part One (verses 1-11)

1. Read Jude 1:1,24 Who is Jude? How does Christ keep us from apostasy?
2. Was Jude just being “nice” when he wrote: *May mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you* ? Do such spiritual blessings actually have an impact on human lives? How should we bless other Christians?
3. Read Jude 1:3,4 What was Jude’s urgent purpose in writing this epistle? Why did he change his mind about what he was going to write? What was the nature of the threat?
4. Who saved the Israelites out of Egypt? (Jude 1:5) What did he do to those who did not believe? Does church membership save us? What should we tell unbelieving church members?
5. Read Jude 1:6 What happens even to angels who rebel against God?
6. Why were Sodom and Gomorrah destroyed? (Jude 1:7, 2 Peter 2:6, Genesis 19:4-5, Romans 1:26-28, Isaiah 3:9, Jeremiah 23:14, Ezekiel 16:49,50)
7. Read Jude 1:8 How do false prophets rely on their own dreams instead of on Holy Scripture? (Jeremiah 23:25-29) What happens when we put our own revelations and ideas on the same level, or even higher than, Scripture? How did these false prophets affront God?
8. Who is Michael the archangel? (Daniel 10:13,21; Daniel 12:1, Revelation 12:7, 1 Thessalonians 4:16) The dispute about the body of Moses is extra-canonical. Why did Jude include it? In the light of this, how should we rebuke (or not rebuke) the Devil?
9. Read Jude 1:10-11 What are some of the common themes between these false prophets and the major Old Testament figures of evil in Cain, Balaam and Korah? (Genesis 4, Numbers 22, and Numbers 16)

Study Number Six – Jude Part Two - Jude 12-25

1. Jude has quite a list of metaphors for the wicked false prophets (Jude 1:12,13) what is Jude indicating by the following analogies: hidden reefs, shepherds feeding themselves, fruitless trees and wandering stars? What is the fate that awaits these false teachers?
2. Who was Enoch? (Genesis 5:21-24) What was Enoch like?
3. Read Jude 1:14,15 The Greek word for ungodly is “asebeias” which was a criminal charge in ancient Greece for the "desecration and mockery of divine objects", for "irreverence towards the state gods” and disrespect towards parents and dead ancestors. How do we see manifestations of this in society today? How will God avenge this ungodliness?
4. Grumblers, malcontents, loud-mouthed boasters and flatterers (Jude 1:16): how do divisive people use these tactics to gain advantage in a church and then to split the church and take away people after them?
5. In verses 17 and 18 Jude seems to refer to 2 Peter 3:3 (see also 2 Timothy 4:3). How is the mockery and scoffing at divine things an indication of the end of a society or of an age?
6. Read Jude 1:19 Divisive people are often devoid of the Spirit. What are the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22,23) and how do divisive people lack these spiritual qualities?
7. Read Jude 1:20,21 What is Jude’s exhortation to his readers for staying spiritually on track? What is praying in the Holy Spirit? (Romans 8:26, 1 Corinthians 14:14,15)
8. What are we to do for Christians who are falling away because of a) doubt or b) involvement in sexual immorality? (Jude 1:22,23)
9. Read Jude 1:24,25 How does this magnificent doxology describe God and the things that God does for believers? Are you looking forward to being “blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy”? What is your favorite description of the Lord in this passage of Scripture?

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