

THE
DISCIPLESHIP
PLACE

Telling the New Testament
Story of God



SESSION 16
1 and 2 Peter and Jude

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1 and 2 Peter and Jude

SESSION OVERVIEW

Letters of Peter

Letter of Jude

Application

Exam

Discussion Guide for Mentor and Participant

LEARNER OBJECTIVES

At the end of this session, you should:

- gain an understanding of the types of letters written in the first century.
- know the purpose and main content for the General Letters, 1 and 2 Peter, and Jude.

1 and 2 Peter and Jude

INTRODUCTION

As indicated earlier, 1 and 2 Peter and Jude are among the General or Catholic Epistles. Certainly, Peter was one of the most significant persons in the New Testament. He was among that innermost circle of Jesus' disciples, namely Peter, James, and John. Our earliest (in terms of when written) information about Peter comes from Paul's letters. In Galatians 1:18, Peter is a leader in the church at Jerusalem. As a new Christian, Paul is interested in coming to know this close associate of Jesus. At times, the relationship between Peter and Paul seems to have been quite unsettled.

While Paul is generally known as the apostle to the Gentiles, Peter is known for his work among his own people, the Jews. It is not surprising that the Canon includes letters attributed to this central figure, which later in the fourth century became known as the founder of the church in Rome. Luther recognized the value of 1 Peter. He categorized it with the Gospel of John, Romans, and Galatians as providing the essential knowledge needed for salvation. These works describe how Christ overcame sin and death and provides life, righteousness, and salvation.

The same is not the case for 2 Peter that met with strong resistance in terms of acceptance into the Christian Canon. A criticism leveled against it is that it involves a body of traditions to be believed and affirmed rather than affirming a personal relationship with Christ. John Elliott asserts that it has lost a genuine evangelical spirit and become more interested in the Church as an institution. Other than in the areas of biblical inspiration and authority (1:20-21), 2 Peter has been largely ignored in terms of exegesis, theology, and worship. In the area of hymnology, however, echoes of its language is found in "O God Our Help in Ages Past." Second Peter's inclusion in the Canon demonstrates, however, that the Early Church realized its importance.

Jude is among those letters largely ignored in the history of Christianity. Like James, Jude also was the recipient of negative words by Luther. He asserted that it was "nothing more than an epistle directed against clerics, bishops, priests, and monks" and the ecclesiastical abuses of his day. He did not include Jude among the chief books that are supposed to lay the foundations of the faith. Again, however, Jude's inclusion in the Canon demonstrates the Early Church understood its value.

LETTERS OF PETER

NOTES

These two General Epistles are the only direct writings we have of the apostolic hero Peter. They address the situation and needs of the Early Church from a primarily Jewish standpoint, although Peter does not narrow his audience to just Jewish Christians as James did.

WHO?

Author:

- Traditional position. Peter, the apostle, grew up in Bethsaida and lived in Capernaum with his family. Both of these towns were on the Sea of Galilee. He was a fisherman by trade, became a disciple of Jesus and a leader in the Early Church. He was a Jewish Christian who recognized Gentiles did not have to become Jews to be Christians.
- Peterine tradition. This position, developed in the 19th and 20th centuries, argues that differences in style between 1 Peter and 2 Peter indicate different authors.

These differences can easily be explained by reading the letters themselves. First Peter 5:12 says, "With the help of Silas, whom I regard as a faithful brother, I have written to you briefly. . ." Second Peter does not acknowledge any help in writing. First Peter is considered to have better Greek than 2 Peter.

Audience:

- 1 Peter. "God's elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia" (1 Pet. 1:1). These cities were in Northern Asia Minor.

Another possible translation of the designation strangers is exiles. Traditionally, the exiles of 1 Peter have been understood in a symbolic way. The term *parepidemos* or exile of 1:1 presents the idea of a transient visitor who temporarily resides as a foreigner in a given location. The exiles have been interpreted as the people of God whose home is in heaven and who are pilgrims on earth. The exiles are not permanent residents on earth, but travelers on a journey. Their true citizenship is in the kingdom of God and the laws of this kingdom govern their lives. Nothing in life must interfere with arrival at their final destination.


NOTES

In more recent times, particularly through the work of John Elliot, *A Home for the Homeless*, the spiritualization of the audience of 1 Peter has been called into question. Elliot distinguishes between the *parepidemos* (exile) of 1:1 and the *paroikos* or resident alien of 2:11. As pointed out by Elliot, the term *paroikos* or resident alien is a technical term referring to a person having specific legal status as a non-citizen. Taken together exiles and aliens refer to the “suspected, disdained, vulnerable outsider.” What difference does all this make in terms of interpretation? Rather than referring to the people of God as pilgrims on earth who are away from their true heavenly homes, 1 Peter is concerned with an actual sociological group of persons who find themselves away from their earthly homes and dwelling in a foreign land.

- 2 Peter. “To those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours” (2 Pet. 1:1).

WHERE?

Author: “Babylon” (1 Pet. 5:3), which was alias for Rome. This was probably the location for both letters. (Unknown for Peterine tradition author.)

Audience: Northern Asia Minor for 1 Peter, anywhere for 2 Peter (Unknown for Peterine tradition audience).

WHEN?

1 Peter: Before AD 64-66 (AD 100+ for Peterine tradition)

2 Peter: Around AD 68 (AD 100+ for Peterine tradition)

These dates in the 60s would indicate a time of great unrest and tension, especially for the Jewish Christians. They fit the setting of the letters, which talk about suffering for doing good and being a Christian. The command to submit to every authority would also fit this difficult time when the Jews were in revolt against the Romans.

WHAT?*Special Verses*

- 1 Pet. 1:7: “[Trials] have come so that your faith . . . may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.”
- 1 Pet. 1:15-16: “But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: ‘Be holy, because I am holy.’ ”


NOTES

- 1 Pet. 1:18-23: By whom and at what price were we ransomed?
- 1 Pet. 2:11-3:13: Conduct codes for Christian aliens and exiles, specifically slaves, wives, husbands and everyone.
- 1 Pet. 3:14-17: The attitude we should have when suffering for righteousness' sake.
- 1 Pet. 5:5-6: God and humility.
- 1 Pet. 5:7: "Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you."
- 1 Pet. 5:8: "Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour."
- 2 Pet. 1:5-7: With what should we support or add to our faith?
- 2 Pet. 2:1-22: Description and fate of false teachers.
- 2 Pet. 3:3-18: Second Coming of Christ.
- 2 Pet. 3:8-9: "But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."
- 2 Pet. 3:15-16: Indicates Paul's letters are known and authoritative.

WHY?

1 Peter: First Peter was written to encourage believers in the face of persecution and suffering (present or coming). The suffering Christians are here called upon to embrace not just any suffering. Suffering comes from many avenues. At times, it derives from our own poor choices. On other occasions, suffering comes from circumstances entirely beyond our control. Key passages on suffering in 1 Peter are 2:18-24 and 4:12-19. This latter passage begins: "Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that is taking place among you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you are sharing Christ's suffering, so you may also be glad and shout for joy when his glory is revealed. If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the spirit of glory, which is the Spirit of God, is resting on you. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, a criminal, or even as a mischief maker" (12-15, NRSV). In both passages, innocent suffering or suffering for doing good is addressed, not suffering for doing wrong.


NOTES

The prototype for unjust or innocent suffering is Christ himself as indicated in 1 Peter 2:21-24 that draws upon suffering servant imagery from Isaiah 53. This passage from Isaiah was one of the primary texts used by Christians in seeking to understand the life and sufferings of Jesus Christ. A Christian does not seek suffering for suffering itself. The hurts pains of life are just as deep for the Christian as for the non-Christian. There is a type of joy, however, in innocent suffering in that at this point the believer identifies with Jesus himself. In 1 Peter, suffering is to be understood not unexpected for those who belong to the household (4:17) or family of God (see 2:5—a spiritual house).

- To keep their eyes on eternal salvation and not on the temporal persecutions (1:6-9, 4:13).
- He contrasts life as a foreigner or Pilgrim (citizen of heaven) versus the life of the world.

The Life of the Pilgrim**The Life of the World**

Be obedient to God (1:14, 22)

Rebellion against God

Be holy (1:15)

Unholiness

Live as servants (2:16, 4:11)

Live selfishly

Be prayerful (3:7, 4:7)

Reject God

Live openly, transparently (2:16, 3:16)

Live deceitfully

Do what is good (2:15, 3:16-17)

Do what is wrong

Be gentle and respectful (3:15)

Live harshly/insolently

Love one another deeply (1:22, 4:8)

Hate one another

Exercise self-control (1:13, 4:7, 5:8)

Live excessively, wildly

Live humbly (5:6)

Be proud and arrogant

Reject evil (2:11)

Embrace evil

Accept human rule (2:13, 17)

Reject human rule

Control sinful desires (2:1, 11)

Give desires free rein

Do God's will (4:2)

Reject God's will

Share with others (4:9)

Hoard possessions

Use our gifts for others (4:10-11)

Refuse to share

The author of 1 Peter concludes that the Christian's main goal is to follow Christ, wherever that leads.

2 Peter: Christians are to grow in grace: goodness, knowledge, self-control, endurance, godliness, and mutual affection (1:5-8).

 **NOTES**

Believers can have confidence in the Old Testament and in the apostolic teachings (1:12-21). Of particular note, verse 12 reads: “Therefore I intend to keep on reminding you of these things, though you know them already and are established in the truth that has come to you.” Verses 20-21 declare: “First of all you must understand this, that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by human will, by men and women moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God” (NRSV). These verses accord with 2 Peter’s emphasis on tradition. They point their audience to the basic traditions and understandings on which their faith has been based. In 1:20-21, the divine aspect of scripture is stressed.

Believers must beware of false teachers and doctrines (2:1-22). In this his portrayal of these false teachers and doctrines, the author of 2 Peter most closely follows Jude. It appears that certain heresies were threatening the unity of the church. It seems that some persons were willing to discount the utterances and traditions from the past that include “the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets, and the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken through your apostles” (3:2, NRSV). Evidently, this discounting of past teachings led to a discounting of belief in the coming of Christ.

Peter gives an explanation as to why Jesus had not returned. God’s time is not like our time and delay indicates God’s patience. He also explains the day of the Lord will come like a thief, so we must be ready by living holy and godly lives (3:8-13).

LETTER OF JUDE



NOTES

Jude is a short, one-chapter letter that is very similar to 2 Peter 2. It reflects the same, tension-filled time as Peter's letters and a similar concern for how to identify and deal with false teachers. From a literary standpoint, David Barr refers to Jude as: "a fine example of an ancient exercise known as invective, the dark side of demonstrative rhetoric [persuasive argument], the opposite of eulogy. As eulogy intends to praise the worthy, so invective seeks to damn the unworthy." Jude is much concerned with the denunciation of persons who are promoting false beliefs.

WHO?

Author: "Servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James." He was most likely, the half-brother of Jesus and brother of James the patriarch of the Church in Jerusalem.

Audience: "All chosen and loved by God the Father and kept safe by Jesus Christ." The text seems to point to Jewish Christians who have a background in the Old Testament and Jewish pseudepigraphical writings such as 1 Enoch (Jude 14-15). Jewish pseudepigraphical writings are written under false names and largely appear between the second century BC and first century AD. They were not included in anyone's canon of sacred texts. Jude cites 1 Enoch 1:9, a document which presents itself as being written in the seventh generation of the human race, but which was actually written during the second century BC. First Enoch was well known among Jewish and Christian audiences.

WHERE?

Author: Unknown, probably Jerusalem

Audience: Unknown, perhaps Jewish Christian Churches of the Diaspora

WHEN?

AD 66-80. This was a time of increased tension between rabbinic Judaism and Jewish Christianity. Christianity is facing persecution from Judaism and the Roman government.



WHAT?

Special Verses

- 4, 8-19: False teachers depicted in 8-13 as dreamers who defile the flesh, those who reject authority, slanderers of the glorious ones (angels) and of what they do not understand, those who go the way of Cain and abandon themselves to Balaam's error, those who perish in Korah's rebellion, those who are blemishes on your love-feasts, waterless clouds carried away by winds, autumn trees without fruit, wild waves of the sea, casting up the foam of their own shame, and wandering stars for whom the deepest darkness has been reserved forever. These verses refer to those who led others into sin or misguide and who are dangers to the community. For example, Balaam was willing to seduce God's people to idolatry for a reward.
- 24-25: "To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy—to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen." In this closing doxology, Jude leaves no doubt of his confidence that his audience need not succumb to any type of false teaching and can be brought to final salvation.

WHY?

Some principles that come out of this little letter include:

- Believers must fight for the doctrine of the deity of Jesus because this is fundamental to the Christian faith.
- Salvation involves moral transformation. Concerning this issue, John Elliot: "Confusing the liberty which divine grace confers with the license to self-indulgence, sexual promiscuity, rejection of authority, and exploitation of other believers, they [Jude's audience] denied with their behavior that Jesus Christ is our only Master and Lord."
- False teachers can be identified by their lifestyles, which do not live up to their teachings. It appears that Jude's audience claimed a type of knowledge and gift of the Spirit that made it possible for them to remain unaffected by normal concepts of morality.
- To urge the believers to build one another up and resist evil, false teachers, and doctrines (Jude 4, 8, 10-16).

APPLICATION



NOTES

1. Read 1 and 2 Peter and Jude in two different translations. Look for answers to the five hermeneutical questions Who, What, Where, When, and Why. How do your findings correspond with those presented in this session? Any new findings than those presented in this session?
2. Read Jude 4, 8-19 that describes false teachers. Compare these verses with 2 Pet. 2:1-22. What are the similarities? What are the differences? What is the significance of what you have discovered?
3. Jude 8-13 provides a description of the false teachers who were a threat to the Christian community. In this description, the persons of Cain, Korah, and Balaam are mentioned. Using information from study Bibles, Bible dictionaries, or Internet websites (Biblical Studies Foundation <http://www.netbible.com>; Blue Letter Bible <http://www.blueletterbible.org>; Crosswalk.com Bible Study Tools <http://bible.crosswalk.com>), research these individuals. How does what you have discovered help throw light on the nature of these teachers and your understanding of these passages? Of what relevance are your findings for the Church today?

EXAM



NOTES

1. Unlike Jude, 1 and 2 Peter were readily accepted into the New Testament Canon.
 - A. True
 - B. False
2. The hymn, "O God Our Help in Ages Past," echoes the language of _____.
 - A. 1 Peter
 - B. 2 Peter
 - C. Jude
 - D. 1 Enoch
3. Believers must beware of false teachers and doctrines. In his portrayal of these false teachers and doctrines, the author of 2 Peter most closely follows Jude.
 - A. True
 - B. False
4. According to 1 Peter, a Christian should seek suffering in that it identifies him or her with Jesus himself.
 - A. True
 - B. False
5. _____ stresses the reliability and divine origins of scripture.
 - A. 1 Peter
 - B. 2 Peter
 - C. Jude
 - D. 1 Enoch
6. The audience of _____ appears to have denied with their behavior that Jesus Christ is our only Master and Lord. They did not recognize that salvation involves moral transformation.
 - A. 1 Peter
 - B. 2 Peter
 - C. Jude
 - D. 1 Enoch

 **NOTES**

7. “[Trials] have come so that your faith . . . may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.” This is the language of _____.
 - A. 1 Peter
 - B. 2 Peter
 - C. Jude
 - D. 1 Enoch

8. The author of Jude was likely one of Jesus’ twelve apostles.
 - A. True
 - B. False

9. The prototype for unjust/innocent suffering is Christ himself as indicated in 1 Peter that draws upon suffering servant imagery from _____.
 - A. Isaiah 53
 - B. Jeremiah 15
 - C. Joel 2
 - D. Malachi 4

10. _____ makes the case that rather than referring to the people of God as pilgrims on earth who are away from their true heavenly homes, 1 Peter is concerned with an actual sociological group of persons who find themselves away from their earthly homes and dwelling in a foreign land.
 - A. Origen
 - B. Martin Luther
 - C. David Barr
 - D. John Elliot

11. First Peter addresses how a discounting of past teachings by the prophets and apostles led to a discounting of belief in the coming of Christ.
 - A. True
 - B. False

12. Luther recognized the value of 1 Peter. He categorized it with all of the following except _____ as providing the essential knowledge needed for salvation.
 - A. Gospel of John
 - B. Romans
 - C. Galatians
 - D. Jude

**NOTES**

13. Second Peter gives an explanation as to why Jesus had not returned: God's time is not like our time and delay indicates God's patience.
- A. True
 - B. False
14. In terms of audience, the text in _____ seems to point to Jewish Christians who have a background in the Old Testament and Jewish pseudepigraphical writings such as 1 Enoch.
- A. Galatians
 - B. 1 Peter
 - C. 2 Peter
 - D. Jude

DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR MENTOR AND PARTICIPANT

**NOTES**

Be prepared to discuss the following with your mentor.

1. What is the relationship of the virtue of integrity to what a person says and does?
2. Would you believe a person who says one thing and does another? Why or why not?
3. What are the main characteristics of false teachers described in 2 Peter and Jude? Can we use these characteristics/principles to identify false teachers today? Why or why not?
4. Would a shift from the traditional symbolic interpretation of the audience of 1 Peter as referring to strangers in the world and, thereby, pilgrims on earth to seeing the audience as resident aliens or actual persons who are away from home and living in a foreign land affect our interpretation and understanding of 1 Peter? If so, how?
5. How does 1 Peter address the topic of suffering? Does this letter help with your questions about suffering? If so, in what ways?
6. What new insights have you gained from your study of 1 and 2 Peter and Jude?