

Introduction To 2 Peter And Jude

I. *Purpose*

- A. Peter's second letter is a reminder of the truth of the gospel as opposed to the heresies of false teachers. Jude's purpose seems to move along similar lines. In the first century, alarming advances were being made by an incipient form of Gnosticism.
- B. The Gnostics viewed everything material as evil and everything spiritual as good. They therefore cultivated their "spiritual" lives and allowed their flesh to do anything it liked, with the result that they were guilty of all kinds of lawlessness. Both letters were written to general recipients of Christians in the kingdom of God.

II. *Authorship Of 2 Peter*

- A. Second Peter is the most doubted book in the New Testament, as far as traditional authorship goes, so much so that most critical scholars consider pseudonymous authorship proven beyond argument. Even conservative scholars consider 2 Peter "the most problematic of all the New Testament epistles." As we will see, the evidence against Peter's authorship is not as conclusive as many think.
- B. Many liberal scholars' reasoning is cumulative. James is pseudonymous and late, and Jude shows knowledge of James, so Jude is later and therefore pseudonymous. Second Peter makes use of Jude, so 2 Peter is later than Jude and also pseudonymous. The whole chain of reasoning is weaker than its individual links. In other words, even if there is a certain plausibility for each link of the chain of reasoning, the probability that all the links are related is much smaller.
- C. The reason conservative scholars consider 2 Peter problematic is that they usually honor the external evidence for the traditional authorship of a book, and in this case the external evidence is somewhat weak.
 - 1. Up to Origen (d. 254) there are possible faint allusions to 2 Peter in the "church fathers," but nothing conclusive.
 - 2. The Muratorian Canon (c. 190) is unfortunately corrupt at this point, and it is impossible to tell for certain what the writer was saying about Peter's epistles.
 - 3. Origen uses 2 Peter and apparently regards it as canonical, but he mentions that some doubt its authenticity.
 - 4. Eusebius (4th century) regarded the letter as doubtful but not spurious (Ecclesiastical History 3.3.1).
 - 5. Jerome (5th century) accepted the epistle but noted that even in his day some doubted it. He was the first to suggest that the

language differences between 1 and 2 Peter sprang from Peter's use of two different secretaries.

D. The external evidence, then, shows doubts from the earliest records we have of reactions to 2 Peter, but no one rejecting it as false.

E. There are a number of arguments against Peter's authorship.

1. Personal references.

a) The author calls himself Peter and refers to his presence at the transfiguration. He refers in 3:1 to a former letter he has written and again and again drops hints that he is the apostle Peter. Critical scholars think he is overdoing it, "protesting too much," and thereby showing his hand.

b) But they cannot have it both ways. In a letter like 1 Peter, the absence of personal references is used as an argument against authenticity. It seems that the personal references idea is brought in to support a stand taken on other grounds. Since the argument can cut both ways, it has limited use.

2. Reference to Paul.

a) Scholars say that the author refers to a collection of Paul's letters, which we know to have taken place around A.D. 90. This proves that 2 Peter was written after 90.

b) But Peter's statement does not require Paul's letters to have been collected, just to have been written and circulated; and we do not know for sure when the letters were collected. This is a case of trying to prove one hypothesis by means of another.

3. Gnostic opponents.

a) Some have said that since 2 Peter's opponents seem to be Gnostic, this argues for a second century date.

b) It is true that the great Gnostic systems of Valentinus, Ptolemaeus, Basilides, etc., were second century phenomena, but it is clear that many Gnostic type ideas were "in the air" in the first century and perhaps even earlier.

c) First Corinthians, written in the mid-fifties, has pre-Gnostic ideas. Second Peter only requires the Gnostic attitude and some Gnostic ideas; a Gnostic "theology" or school is not required.

4. "The fathers fell asleep."

a) The statement by scoffers in 3:4 that "the fathers" have long since died and the Lord has not come is taken by some to refer to the first generation of Christians.

b) This is not necessarily so; the "fathers" could simple be "our ancestors," and the reference could be to the fact that the world has not changed radically within human memory.

5. Second Peter's use of Jude.
 - a) Liberal scholars think that Jude was pseudonymous and are sure that 2 Peter shows evidence of familiarity with Jude.
 - b) The use of Jude by Peter will be discussed later. But if Jude is genuine the argument collapses.
6. Differences in style and doctrinal expression between 1 and 2 Peter.
 - a) This difference is real; the two show different Greek styles and different patterns of thought. Jerome's suggestion that Peter used two different secretaries makes a lot of sense.
 - (1) We have evidence that Peter's command of literary Greek may have been weak. Mark is said to have been his interpreter in Rome, and Peter is not said to have written a gospel but to have furnished Mark his material. Peter may not have been highly literate, and he may have needed a scribe.
 - (2) We have seen evidence that 1 Peter may have been written with substantial help from Silvanus. If that be true, it is easy to imagine Peter using another scribe, and giving him a similar amount of freedom, in writing 2 Peter.
 - (3) Admittedly, this is the same kind of "chain reasoning" which we accuse liberal scholars of using. But if it is all right for the liberal scholar, it is all right for us, especially since our aim is simply to show that the arguments against authorship of Peter are not that strong.
7. To sum up, 2 Peter has been a doubted book through all of its history that we know of. The doubts are not just from modern liberals; ancient "fathers" of the church had their doubts too. But remember that they were doubts only, and that the church used the letter all along and considered it to be the word of God. The actual church use of a book carried a great deal of weight in the decision to canonize it or not.
8. The objections to Peter's authorship are serious, but each of them can be plausibly answered. A final test of the book, which admittedly is very subjective, is simply to read Peter's literature (1-2 Peter, the Gospel of Peter, and the Apocalypse of Peter). One can easily see which are in the mainstream of first century Christian (i. e. apostolic) thought and which are written to promote heretical notions.

III. **Date Of 2 Peter**

- A. We will assume that Peter did indeed write 2 Peter (though probably with the help of a scribe). Second Peter is later than 1 Peter (cf. 2 Peter 3:1).

- B. We have already dated 1 Peter in the mid 60's. If this is so, 2 Peter was written shortly before Peter's death, probably around A.D. 67.

IV. **Authorship Of Jude**

- A. Jude identifies himself as the brother of James (vs. 1), an elder in the Jerusalem church (Acts 15), and the half brother of Jesus (Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3).
- B. Doubts about Jude have sprung more from his use of extracanonical material than from the probability of pseudonymous authorship. Two main arguments against authorship by Jude are advanced.
1. The high quality of the Greek.
 - a) We have seen this issue arise again and again, e.g. with James or 1 Peter. The answer is the same. We do not know anything about these men's educational opportunities, and we can be reasonably sure they knew at least some Greek.
 - b) In addition there is always the possibility that any of them used a highly literate scribe, giving him considerable freedom to help with the composition of the work.
 2. Internal considerations.
 - a) Jude advances the concept of the faith as something handed down, a deposit in vs. 3. Here again we see, as we do in 1-2 Timothy, Titus, that there is evidence of this kind of thinking earlier than critical scholars usually admit, e.g. in 1 Corinthians 11 and 15.
 - b) Some say the writer speaks of the apostles as of men of long ago in vs. 17, negating the possibility of Jude writing the book. This is not conclusive.
- C. Here again we have external evidence for traditional authorship, fairly objective, against subjective concerns that lead some to deny traditional authorship. One's methodology, especially in this case one's preference for external or internal evidence, governs one's results. There is nothing in the internal evidence that demands nontraditional authorship.
- D. Also, consider the external evidence. The Muratorian Canon (late second century), Tertullian (d. 220), Clement of Alexandria (mid-third century) all regarded it as canonical, though Origen (d. 254) doubted it. The fact that Origen, Eusebius, and Jerome doubted (but did not reject) the book, may well come from Jude's use of works from the Old Testament pseudepigrapha.
1. In vs. 9, Jude refers to an incident in the *Assumption of Moses*, where the archangel Michael disputes with Satan about custody of Moses' body, and in vss. 14-15 he quotes directly from Enoch 1:9.

2. But note that he does not use a formula for quoting like "as the scripture says" or "as the Spirit says." This need be no more than a literary allusion like the use of the traditional names Jannes and Jambres for the Egyptian sorcerers (2 Timothy 3:8), or Paul's use of pagan poets (Acts 17:28; 1 Corinthians 15:33; Titus 1:12), allusions that cause no one much concern.

V. **Date Of Jude**

- A. Since we know nothing about Jude's life, we cannot draw any conclusions about the date of the letter.
- B. If this letter was used by Peter in 2 Peter, the writing would have to be sometime prior to Peter's death or before A.D. 65. Everything considered, the letter is best dated about 60 to 80.

VI. **Jude And 2 Peter 2**

- A. The first question is whether we can believe that any writer of scripture used any other's work. To some extent this has to do with one's view of inspiration, not whether the books of scripture were inspired, but how it was done.
- B. We do not have to be afraid of the idea that scripture writers occasionally used other books as sources, because there is evidence that these inspired books were produced, on the human level, by the same methods as ordinary books.
 1. Luke claims to have done careful research to write his gospel for Theophilus (Luke 1:1-4).
 2. Paul uses the Corinthians' letter to him, apparently, to help structure his response in 1 Corinthians 7:1.
 3. Paul sometimes seems to quote early Christian hymns (Philippians 2:5-11; 1 Timothy 3:16).
- C. It should not seem strange to us if an inspired writer used the work of another in his work. This is what the New Testament writers do each time they quote in the Old Testament; what we may have in Peter and Jude is a similar kind of borrowing, only between the New Testament and New Testament.
- D. However, it must be added that this is not a necessary conclusion. The apostles had constantly heard one another talk, and certain expressions and scriptural illustrations became part of the common "vocabulary" -- especially in a culture that relied heavily on hearing and remembering.