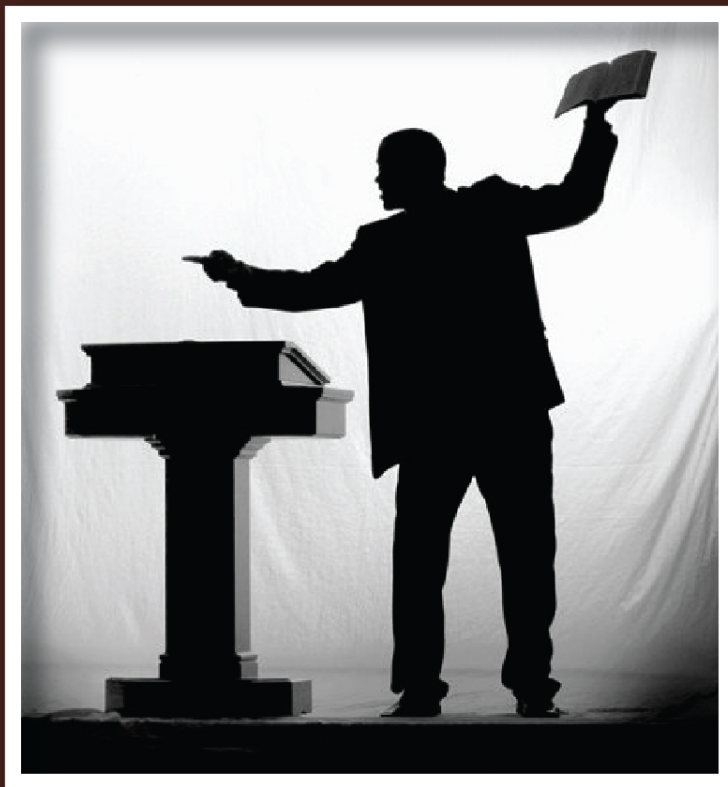


Living in the shadow of judgement

Studies in the letters of 2 Peter & Jude



*Seven homegroup studies challenging us
to participate in God's own divine nature
and avoid the dangers of false teaching*



Introduction to 2 Peter and Jude

The author of 2 Peter was the disciple of Jesus known as Simon Peter or the rock. This one-time fisherman of Galilee denied Jesus but was restored, and rose to lead the disciples on the day of Pentecost. Jude, on the other hand, was a half-brother of Jesus who at one time, along with the rest of Jesus' brothers, wanted nothing to do with him. By this time, however, Jude had risen to such prominence in the Church that he could now send a letter in his own name.

The second letter of Peter and the letter of Jude are two of the latest letters that we have in the New Testament. In the case of 2 Peter, it is probable that this was the Apostle Peter's last will and testament, written shortly before he was arrested and executed in Rome around 64AD (some scholars think it was in fact sent posthumously). The letter of Jude is considered the earlier of the two letters and it is believed that Peter reworked parts of Jude's letter to make it more accessible to a wider Gentile audience, which explains some of the similarities between the two letters.

All of the New Testament letters are written to address specific problems arising among the churches to which they are addressed. However, both these letters were sent as 'circular' letters, intended to be read out in all the congregations of the Church of the day. They were relevant to all the churches (rather than specific communities).

The Apostles wrote a number of letters to address persecution from the world outside the Church and the danger of backsliding to avoid such discomfort. In other letters, they expose and address false teaching from outside the church. In 2 Peter and Jude it appears that false teaching has arisen from within the Church which has led to such moral laxity that the Church appears indistinguishable from the world in which it lives. These false teachers are part of the Church establishment, and they're on the payroll. They appear to have been heavily influenced by some of the worldly philosophy of the times (Epicureanism). These leaders perhaps feel led by a need to 'keep with the times' and give the people what they want – as a result, the very existence of the church is at stake, as false church leaders pander to their congregations' sinful desires.

Richard J Hawes Dec 2017

Study 1: How can we be sure of our calling? (2 Peter 1:1-11)

Purpose: Peter reminds us that we have already received (past tense) a faith as precious as Jesus' first disciples. He assures us that Christ has also given us (past tense) everything that is necessary for life and godliness – we have his promise on that! In response we are to make every effort to grow in Christ-like character (remember he has already given us all the resources to do so). If we do these things we will confirm what Christ has already begun in us.

- 1. How do we know we're suitable for the job we do or the course we are studying?**

Read 2 Peter 1:1-2

- 2. How does Peter refer to himself in his opening address (2 Pet. 1:1a)? How is it different to his previous letter (1 Pet. 1:1a)? Why do you think this might be?**

- 3. What is it that Peter's readers have already received (2 Pet. 1:1b-2)? How does this reassure you about your calling?**

- 4. What do these few lines teach us about Jesus (2 Pet. 1:1-2)? How does this reassure you about your calling (i.e. that you are a believer and saved)?**

Read 2 Peter 1:3-4

- 5. What is the challenge that faces us as Christians? How does Christ help us meet this challenge (2 Pet. 1:3)? How can we fail the challenge?**
- 6. What two promises does Christ give us (2 Pet. 1:4)? How do these promises reassure you about your calling?**

Read 2 Peter 1:5-10

- 7. What are the qualities that an 'effective' Christian should develop (1 Pet. 1:5-7)?**

Study 1: How can we be sure of our calling?

Prayers from the study

Prayers for the church (including your mission partners)

Prayers arising from your group

Study 2: How can we be sure it's all true? (2 Peter 1:12-21)

Purpose: Peter is on death row in Rome, and he knows his time is short. False teachers are undermining the Gospel story – claiming at the very least that Peter and the disciples were not telling the truth. Peter however appeals to the fact that he was an eyewitness to the things he is teaching. Furthermore, he points to the Old Testament Prophets for more evidence that the Apostolic Faith and gospel are true. In a world where people seek to undermine the gospel narrative and pour scorn on what we believe – let us remember what was handed on to us, and who it was handed on by – for the Apostles were in a unique position to know.

1. **How do we know that Julius Caesar or Napoleon Bonaparte existed and did the things they were reputed to have done?**

Read 2 Peter 1:12-15

2. **What are the three 'Rs' that Peter challenges his readers with (2 Pet. 1:12-15 NIV)?**

3. **Why are these three 'Rs' so important for our Christian lives? What do these three 'Rs' involve?**

Prayers from the study

Prayers for the church (including your mission partners)

Prayers arising from your group

Study 3: How can we be sure there'll be a judgement? (2 Peter 2:1-9)

Purpose: Peter begins by contrasting the true prophet/teachers with the false prophet/teachers who appear unconcerned by a future reckoning with God. The three OT illustrations teach us that: No-one is exempt from judgement – judgement, though delayed, is real; However, God’s inevitable judgement can be escaped – and we are to hold the offer out to others; The pattern of judgement has been revealed – although living a godly life in an ungodly world will be hard and painful.

Read 2 Peter 2:1-3

- 1. If you were to ask the average person in the street what they thought about a final judgement day, what do you think their views would be?**

- 2. What is the contrast between what Peter is saying now (2 Pet. 2:1-3) and what he said in the previous chapter (1 Pet. 1:16-21)?**

	1 Pet. 1:16-21		1 Pet. 2:1-3
	True Prophets and Teachers		False Prophets and Teachers
(1:16-18)		(2:3)	
(1:20-21)			
(1:13-14)		(2:3)	
(1:12)		(2:2)	
(1:19)		(2:1)	
(1:16)		(2:1)	

- 3. Why is unorthodox teaching so hard to spot, why are false teachers not easy to recognise (2:1c)?**

- 4. What are the effects of the false teachers on the Christians' behaviour, beliefs, and witness (2 Pet. 2:1-2)?**

- 5. Why do you think the false teachers have no fear of God's judgement and destruction (2 Pet. 2:3 c.f. 3:4)? Have you had similar experiences of people thinking this way about God's judgement?**

Read 2 Peter 2:4-9

- 6. What does the example of the rebellious angels teach us about the scope and timing of God's judgement (2 Pet. 2:4 c.f. Gen. 6:1-4)? What are the implications for unrepentant people?**

- 7. What does the generation of the flood teach us about the extent of God's judgement (2 Pet. 2:5 c.f. Gen. 6:9-7:24; Heb. 11:7)? What are the implications for unrepentant people and us?**

Study 3: How can we be sure there'll be a judgement?

Prayers from the study

Prayers for the church (including your mission partners)

Prayers arising from your group

Study 4: How can we be sure of error? (2 Peter 2:10-22)

Purpose: Just as a tree is known by its fruit, false teaching will usually give birth to bad morals. Men will naturally follow their own sinful desires and suppress the truth of God's word or try and redefine it. On the other hand, Christ's disciples will grow in godly character and become more Christ like (c.f. 2 Pet. 1:5-11). How can you be sure of error? – Just look at the fruit it's producing.

1. **How would you know if it is an apple tree or a pear tree that is growing in your garden?**

Read 2 Peter 2:10-16

2. **How does Peter describe the false teachers' character (2 Pet. 2:10, 12-14)? What do these false teachers do in practice, and what is their effect?**

3. **Although the precise details of the false teachers' error may not be clear to us today, nevertheless what do you see as the root issue that the false teachers are in error about (2 Pet. 2:10b-11)? Can you think of examples of this error in the Church today?**

4. **According to Peter, what appears to be the driving factor for Balaam's sin (2 Pet. 2:15)?**

What things can we love more than God's word? How can we guard against our own self-satisfaction and comfort?

Read 2 Peter 2:17-22

5. **If the marks of a false teacher are so obviously repellent, why do you think Christians sometimes fall for them (Jude 17-18)? Can you think of examples where people are drawn in, and who do you think are the most vulnerable to false teachers?**
6. **The false teachers promise their followers much, especially freedom (1 Pet. 2:19). Why is their promise so deceitful?**
7. **What parallel situations do you see today in the church and the world, where, under the banner of freedom, people are actually being enslaved?**

Prayers from the study

Prayers for the church (including your mission partners)

Prayers arising from your group

Study 5: How can we be sure Christ will return and there will be a judgement? (2 Peter 3:1-18)

Purpose: Peter demonstrates that there will be a judgement. He points out that people in the past thought things would carry on as normal – and they were destroyed in the flood. The same God who created the world must surely have the same power to destroy it. Yet the delay in judgement is not a sign it's not coming but a sign of God's grace on sinners. Therefore we need to live our lives in the light of the end of the world – spotless and blameless. While we can look forward to Christ's return as it heralds the new heaven and the new earth, when sharing the gospel, we need to warn people of the wrath to come!

- 1. Why would we believe that our family member is going to pick us up in their car at the time they say they will? Our why should we expect that a friend will do something for us that they said they would?**

Read 2 Peter 3:1-7

- 2. What does Peter exhort his readers to do? How does he expect them to do that (2 Pet. 3:1-2)?**

- 3. What is the reason or argument that the false teachers claim that there will be no 'second coming' or 'judgement day'? Nevertheless what is the *real* driving force behind the false teachers' arguments (2 Pet. 3:3-4)?**

- 4. What truths do the false teachers suppress in order to promote their teaching? (2 Pet. 3:5-7)?**

- 5. What does this teach us about those who scoff at us when we share the good news of Jesus with them? How do these verses reassure you (2 Pet. 3:3-7)?**

Read 2 Peter 3:8-10

- 6. What does Peter teach us concerning the Lord's return (2 Pet. 3:10)? What are the implications for non-believers?**

Study 5: How can we be sure Christ will return and there will be a judgement?

Prayers from the study

Prayers for the church (including your mission partners)

Prayers arising from your group

Study 6: How can we be sure we're in danger? (Jude 1-10)

Purpose. Jude begins his letter by reassuring us that we are called, loved and kept. Nevertheless, so was Israel of the Exodus, and the angels who ministered before God. However, they stand as a stark warning that if we do not stick close to the Lord and his Word then our eternal security is at risk. We are in danger from false teachers (who appeal to our sinful nature) – it is incumbent on us to ask the Lord for wisdom and read the warning signs.

1. **Why are warning signs put up on electricity substations, or along the edge of clifftop paths?**

Read Jude 1-2

2. **Who do you think Jude (Gk. Judas) is? What do you find surprising about the way he introduces himself to his readers (Jude 1-2 c.f. Jam 1:1; Matt. 13:55; Mk. 6:3)? What can we learn from Jude's example?**

Read Jude 3-4

3. **Why do you think Jude believes it is more important that he says what he does rather than what he wanted to say about their 'shared salvation'?**

- 4. Why might Jude's readers not realise that they're in danger? Why might we also not realise that we are in danger from false teachers (Jude 4)?**

Read Jude 5-7

- 5. How does the example of the children of Israel warn us as a church to beware of the influence of false teachers?**

- 6. In what way does the example of the fallen angels demonstrate that anyone is at risk from false teaching?**

- 7. How are Sodom and Gomorrah examples to us, and what parallels might there be today?**

Study 6: How can we be sure we're in danger?

Prayers from the study

Prayers for the church (including your mission partners)

Prayers arising from your group

Study 7: How can we be sure we need to share the Gospel? (Jude 11-25)

Purpose: The way to spot a counterfeit is to know what the genuine article is supposed to look like. Jude exhorts believers to commit themselves to remembering the Faith – the gospel, praying and obeying God’s commandments (vv. 20-21). But we are not simply to look after ‘number one’, we are also to encourage doubters in the congregation, and those playing with fire, of the truths and certainty of the gospel.

- 1. How do you feel about people who climb Ben Nevis in appalling weather conditions only to need rescuing by the Mountain Rescue Service? Or people who paddle out into the English Channel on an inflatable who then need the RNLI to come and bring them back?**

Read Jude 11

- 2. What was the nature of Cain (Gen. 4:1-8), Balaam (Rev. 2:14; Num. 31:16 c.f. Num 25:1-5) and Korah’s (Num. 16:1-5) sin (c.f. Jude 11)?**
- 3. Even though they rejected God, how do we see God’s patience and longsuffering being extended to Cain (Gen 4:6-7), Balaam (Num 22:31-35) and during the Korah incident (Num 16:20-24)? What do we learn about God’s character and judgement?**

Read Jude 12-13

4. Jude uses a series of six metaphors – how does each illustrate the danger of the false teachers who perverted the gospel (Jude 12-13)?

Metaphor	The danger
Blemishes [or hidden reef] at love feasts	
Shepherds feeding themselves	
Clouds without rain	
Trees without fruit	
Waves of the sea	
Wandering stars	

Read Jude 14-19

- 5. **Why should we not be surprised that there are ungodly false teachers who follow their own evil desires in the Church today (Jude 14-19)?**

- 6. **How should Enoch's 'prophecy' motivate us towards personal purity and maintaining purity in the church (Jude 14-15)?**

Read Jude 20-25

- 7. **Jude gives four pieces of good pastoral advice in verses 20 and 21, what are they? What do you think this looks like in practical terms (Jude 20)?**

Pastoral Statement	What it means – Practical outworking

Study 7: How can we be sure we need to share the Gospel?

Prayers from the study

Prayers for the church (including your mission partners)

Prayers arising from your group

St John's, Riverside & St Faith's

Spring 2018 Midweek Programme

Join weekly with God's people for Bible study, fellowship and prayer.

The central prayer meeting runs from 8-9pm in the church, and is repeated the next day 10-11am in the Newland Christian Centre.

We pray for a variety of things, including a mission partner and an area of ministry. It is a great place to encourage one another as we pray together.

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| 9/10/11 Jan | Homegroup Study 1: | <i>How can we be sure of our calling?
(2 Peter 1:1-11)</i> |
| 17/18 Jan | Prayer Meeting | The Persecuted Church |
| 23/24/25 Jan | Homegroup Study 2: | <i>How can we be sure it's all true?
(2 Peter 1:12-21)</i> |
| 31 Jan/1 Feb | Prayer Meeting | Caroline Abblitt
YGP Churches |
| 6/7/8 Feb | Homegroup Study 3: | <i>How can we be sure there'll be
a judgement? (2 Peter 2:1-9)</i> |
| 14/15 Feb | Prayer Meeting | MAF – The Pett Family
The Newland Christian Trust |
| 20/21/22 Feb | Homegroup Study 4: | <i>How can we be sure of error?
(2 Peter 2:10-22)</i> |
| 28/29 Feb | Prayer Meeting | Derek and Jane French
Student Work |
| 6/7/8 Mar | Homegroup Study 5: | <i>How can we be sure Christ will return
and there will be a judgement?
(2 Peter 3:1-18)</i> |
| 14/15 Mar | Prayer Meeting | Label of Love
St Faith's and Riverside |
| 20/21/22 Mar | Homegroup Study 6: | <i>How can we be sure we're in danger?
(Jude 1-10)</i> |
| 27/28/29 Mar | Homegroup Study 7: | <i>How can we be sure we need to share
the Gospel? (Jude 11-25)</i> |