Contending for the Apostolic Faith:

A Comparative Study of the

Epistles of Second Peter and Jude

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Introduction

The similarities between the epistles of Second Peter and Jude have perplexed generations of Bible scholars. And rightly so, considering that only five verses of the latter — i.e., 20% of the total verse count — can be considered clearly independent material, with no viable equivalent in the former. This unique intertextual feature has led scholarship to believe there must be some sort of literary connection between both documents, and to propose a few different hypotheses as to how one relates to the other.[1]

Some have contemplated the hypothesis of a common traditional source wherefrom both canonical works might have borrowed. In a similar approach to that of the Q-source theory for the synoptic gospels, such a tract could have been used in the early church to warn believers on how to identify and avoid false teachings. Nevertheless, a hypothetical lost source has been ruled out as unnecessary by most scholars.[2]

Given that for both epistles historical context and original audience are difficult to delineate, one must turn mostly to internal evidence in order to draw any viable conclusions on authorship, date, and priority of composition.[3] A comparative analysis of such aspects as the language, form, and scope of these documents is necessary in order to investigate which one might be the earliest, and thus have influenced the other. The present study, then, will argue for petrine priority, positing that Jude borrows from, expands upon, and applies Second Peter to his own context and purposes.

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1. Michael Green, *2 Peter and Jude*, rev. ed., in *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*, gen. ed. Canon Leon Morris (Leicester, UK: Inter-Varsity, 1989), 23, 24.

2. *Ibid*., 61–64.

3. Charles Bigg, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude*, in *The International Critical Commentary* (Edinburgh, UK: T. & T. Clark, 1961), 216.

Authorship: Jude Borrows

Although well attested and circulated as early as the Apostolic Fathers, by the time of Origen, the canonicity of Second Peter and Jude has been questioned. In the case of Second Peter, there was doubt in regards to the document's authorship, whereas the problem with Jude was the author's dependance on apocryphal material through the course of his argumentation, such as the book of Enoch, which was regarded with suspicion by many.[4] Despite their difficult way into catholic acceptance, both letters were commended as canonical writings by important church Fathers and regional councils and so gained more general acceptance by the end of the fourth century.[5]

Jerome expressed the problem of authorship suspicion in his days on the basis of stylistic differences between First and Second Peter, proposing as a possible solution the use of different amanuenses in the composition of each letter.[6] During the first few centuries of church history, such great theologians undertook the pains to discriminate between authentic apostolic writings and spurious pseudepigrapha, especially those many that bore the name of the apostle Peter.[7]

The author of Second Peter introduces himself as "Simon Peter," claims apostleship twice directly,[8] refers to Christ's prophecy concerning his death,[9] and retells the episode of the

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4. Bigg, *St. Peter and St. Jude*, 199–215, 305–310.

5. E.M.B. Green, *2 Peter Reconsidered* (London: Tyndale, 1968), 5–7.

6. i.e., secretaries; cf. Jerome, "Lives of Illustrious Men," in Philip Schaff, ed., *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church: Second Series*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, s.d.), ch. 1.

7. M. Green, *2 Peter Reconsidered*, 6, 7.

8. "an apostle of Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 1:1); "us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour" (3:2 KJV).

9. 2 Pet. 1: 13–15; cf. John 21: 18, 19 KJV.

transfiguration.[10] One common objection here is the writer's insistence in proving his apostolic identity by referring to personal experience that would be known to his audience. It should be noted, however, that none of the references to gospel narratives are mere repetitions, but they all read like a fresh retelling of the events, presented in a varied form.[11]

The author of Jude introduces himself as "Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James,"[12] and seems to place himself outside of the apostolic office.[13] The epistle is traditionally attributed to one of the brothers of Jesus, as listed in the gospels.[14] Although the church may have used this their family connection as an honorary title for such men as James and Jude,[15] it does not seem like these used it themselves, and Jude's introduction hints at that fact, as the greek could also read, "Jude: of Jesus Christ, a slave; but a brother of James."[16]

While Second Peter seems to allude more often than to quote, and focuses particularly on the Old Testament,[17] Jude depends on and quotes freely from extra-biblical material, such as the Book of Enoch and the Assumption of Moses, although it is unclear whether the canonical author regarded those books as divinely inspired or borrowed therefrom for the sake of his readers, in

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10. 2 Pet. 1:16–18; cf. Matt. 17:1–9 // Mark 9:2–10 // Luke 9:28–36.

11. Gene L. Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, ebook ed., in *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*, eds. Robert W. Yarbrough and Joshua W. Jipp (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013).

12. Jude 1 KJV.

13. "But, beloved, remember ye the words. . . of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; how that they told you. . ." (Jude 17, 18); comp. ". . . the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour" (2 Pet. 3:2 KJV).

14. ". . . his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas?" (Matt. 13:55); "Is not this. . . the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? . . ." (Mark 6:34 KJV).

15. cf. 1 Co. 9:5; Gal. 1:19 KJV.

16. Ἰούδας Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ δοῦλος, ἀδελφὸς δὲ Ἰακώβου, . . . (Jude 1, Scrivener).

17. G. Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*.

the same way that Paul used to quote from secular philosophy and religious tradition conveniently.[18]

Later authors also seem more or less clearly to interact with the content of the two epistles. A portion of the Epistle of Barnabas reads, "for the day with Him signifieth a thousand years; and this He himself beareth witness, saying; *Behold, the day of the Lord shall be as a thousand years*. Therefore, children, in six days, that is in six thousand years, everything shall come to and end,"[19] a possible reference to the language and teaching of 2 Peter 3:8. Even more clearly, Second Clement reads, "but ye know that the day of judgment cometh even now *as a burning oven, and the powers of the heavens shall melt*, and all the earth as lead melting on the fire, and then shall appear the secret and open works of men,"[20] combining imagery found in Mal. 4:1 and Isa. 34:4 with the judgment scene of 2 Peter 3:7–12, specially evidenced by the use of the unique expression ἡμέρα κρίσεως (2 Pet. 3:7) and the verb φανήσεται ("to appear," as above).[21] Jude seems to stand behind the teaching and language of Barnabas 2:10.[22]

A close connection between Second Peter and the spurious Apocalypse of Peter has also been suggested, sometimes even the latter as a source for the epistle. Nevertheless, the style and content of the Apocalypse are diametrically different than those of the epistle — or of any other canonical document —, the former having stronger ties to graeco-roman mythology, rather.[23]

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18. M. Green, *2 Peter and Jude*, 57, 58.

19. "The Epistle of Barnabas," in J. B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, ed. J. R. Harmer (London: MacMillan, 1891), 15:4.

20. "An Ancient Homily: By an Unknown Author," in Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 16:3.

21. Bigg rightly considers this the author's attempt to make sense of the corrupt εὑρεθήσεται, present in 2 Peter 3:10 in various ancient manuscripts (*St. Peter and St. Jude*, 209).

22. "The Epistle of Barnabas," in Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 2:10; cf. Jude 3, 4.

23. Bigg, *St. Peter and St. Jude*, 207–209.

The most important intertextual relation, though, is the dependance of Jude on Second Peter, as the present work seeks to defend. However, more surprising than the similarities between both epistles are their differences. Despite the clear parallelism of ideas, each author employed his personal style and vocabulary in ways that best serve his distinct purposes. In general, while Peter uses a more harsh language and pompous tone, James exerts a refined care in the wording and structure of his letter.[24]

Jude often shares more vocabulary with Paul than with Peter, such as κλητός (called) and ἅγιος (saints) in reference to the community of believers, and the distinction between πνεῦμα (spirit) and ψυχή (in the sense of flesh), whereas Peter uses ψυχή to signify the soul, instead. Thus, Jude mixes pauline terms upon developing on petrine material.[25] Note in the example below how Jude clearly borrows vocabulary but reapplies terms by switching referents.

<u>2 Peter 2:22</u>

. . . τῆς παραδοθείσης αὐτοῖς **ἁγίας** ἐντολῆς. (Scrivener)

. . . the **holy** commandment delivered unto them. (KJV)

<u>Jude 3</u>

. . . τῇ ἅπαξ παραδοθείσῃ τοῖς **ἁγίοις** πίστει. (Scrivener)

. . . the faith which was once delivered unto the **saints**. (KJV)

Figure 1. Vocabulary comparison.

24. Mark D. Mathews, "The Literary Relationship of 2 Peter and Jude: Does the Synoptic Tradition Resolve This Synoptic Problem?," *Neotestamentica* 44, no. 1 (2010): 51, 52.

25. Bigg, *St. Peter and St. Jude*, 217–220.

Some of Peter's thematic words are δικαιοσύνη "righteousness,"[26] (ἐπι-)γνῶσις "knowledge,"[27] and ὑπόμνησις "remembrance,"[28] and thus his opponents are accused of ἀδικία "unrighteousness"[29] and λήθη "forgetfulness."[30] Jude focuses on πίστις "faith,"[31] the ἁγίοις "saints,"[32] and the verb τηρεῖν "to keep,"[33] accusing his opponents of being ἀσεβεῖς "ungodly."[34]

Peter combines past, present, and future events, and his depiction of the final judgment leads readers into eternal hope. Jude seems to express that he was about to write an irenic pastoral letter to his readers, but was forced into a sudden change of plans.[35] His tone is urgent, and he prefers past and present tenses, with his main depiction of judgment being focused on the punishment of the ungodly.

Although the scope of and circumstances behind each letter may share some commonalities, each author had his own unique motivation and target audience in mind upon writing.[36] Both epistles present a similar warning, but each author employs his own distinct method. Whereas Peter encourages his audience to pursue the knowledge of the way of righteousness from Scriptures, Jude exhorts his readers to keep the holy faith by the Spirit.

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26. cf. 2 Pet. 1:1; 2:5, 21; 3:13 KJV.

27. cf. 2 Pet. 1:2, 3, 8; 2:20; 3:18 KJV.

28. cf. 2 Pet. 1:13; 3:1 KJV.

29. cf. 2 Pet. 2:5, 13, 15 KJV.

30. cf. 2 Pet. 1:9; 3:5 KJV.

31. cf. Jude 3, 20 KJV.

32. cf. Jude 3, 14, 20 KJV.

33. cf. Jude 1, 6, 21 KJV.

34. cf. Jude 4, 15, 18 KJV.

35. Jude 3 KJV.

36. Bigg, *St. Peter and St. Jude*, 217, 218.

Form: Jude Expands

One may object to the idea that Jude developed upon petrine material simply because Second Peter is the longer document of the two. However, it is evident that Jude only borrows directly from the middle portion of Second Peter, that is, 2 Pet. 2:1 – 3:3, and expands mainly in scope, dropping certain sections he considered unnecessary and adding to others, for his own purposes. Jude also composed an introduction and added his own final exhortations, different than those of Second Peter.

See in the chart below how the two authors present their historical material differently:

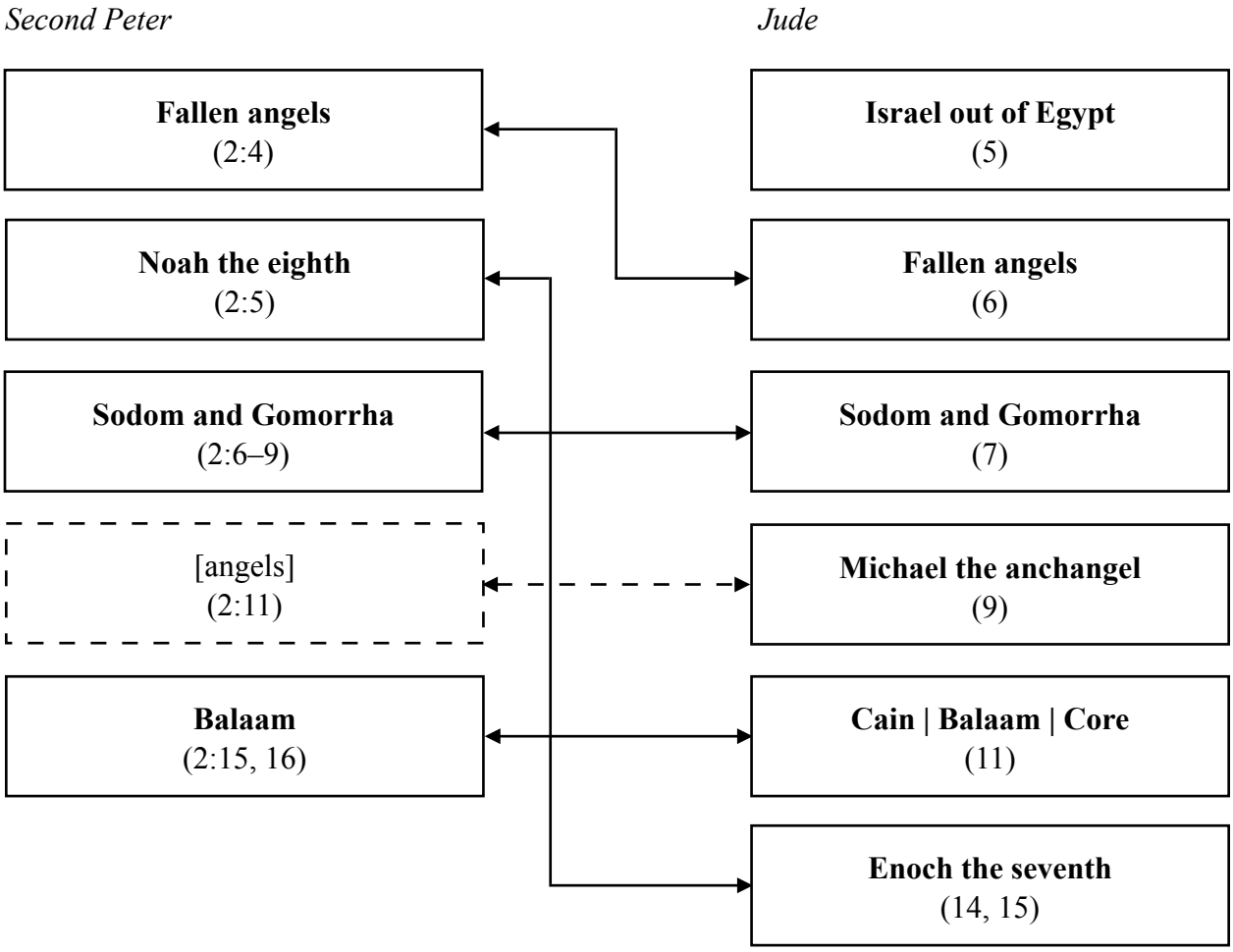


Figure 2. Structure comparison.

Peter starts with a reference to "the angels that sinned,"[37] that is, an angelic fall prior to Adam's; followed by the positive examples of Noah, "a preacher of righteousness," in "the world of the ungodly,"[38] and "just Lot," who lived among a people of "unlawful deeds."[39] Then follows a description of the character and behavior of the unjust. Peter closes his historical section with a reference to Balaam, who loved the wages of ἀδικία, and demonstrated παραφρονία (madness) instead of γνῶσις or ἐπίγνωσις. Peter orders his material chronologically, and uses it to demonstrate the benefits of following the way righteousness, whereas the way of the unjust leads only to madness.

Jude, on the other hand, follows a more thematic rather than strictly chronological order. The author begins with a mention to the first generation of the exodus particularly for their falling away in unbelief.[40] This idea connects straight back to verse 3, where he urges his readers to keep the faith. When he speaks of the fallen angels, Jude specifies that their sin was not keeping their own domain, μή τηρήσαντας τὴν ἑαυτῶν ἀρχήν, wherefore they are reserved for judgment, εἰς κρίσιν. . . τετήρηκεν.[41] Jude's reference to Sodom and Gomorrha does not even mention the righteous Lot, but focuses on the fleshly nature of their common sin, that is, fornicating and going after strange flesh, ἐκπορνεύσασαι, καὶ ἀπελθοῦσαι ὀπίσω σαρκὸς ἑτέρας.[42]

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37. 2 Pet. 2:4 KJV.

38. 2 Pet. 2:5 KJV.

39. 2 Pet. 2:7, 8 KJV.

40. Jude 5 KJV.

41. Jude 6 Scrivener.

42. Jude 7 Scrivener.

One major addition by Jude is the mention of Michael the archangel, where Peter had only referred to angels generically, and most likely as a part of his argument, rather than a corroborating example. Where Peter seems to be teaching a general principle, Jude takes the opportunity to include an otherwise-non-canonical event to his letter. The author thereby builds a crescendo of judgments in the form of reversals, as illustrated below.

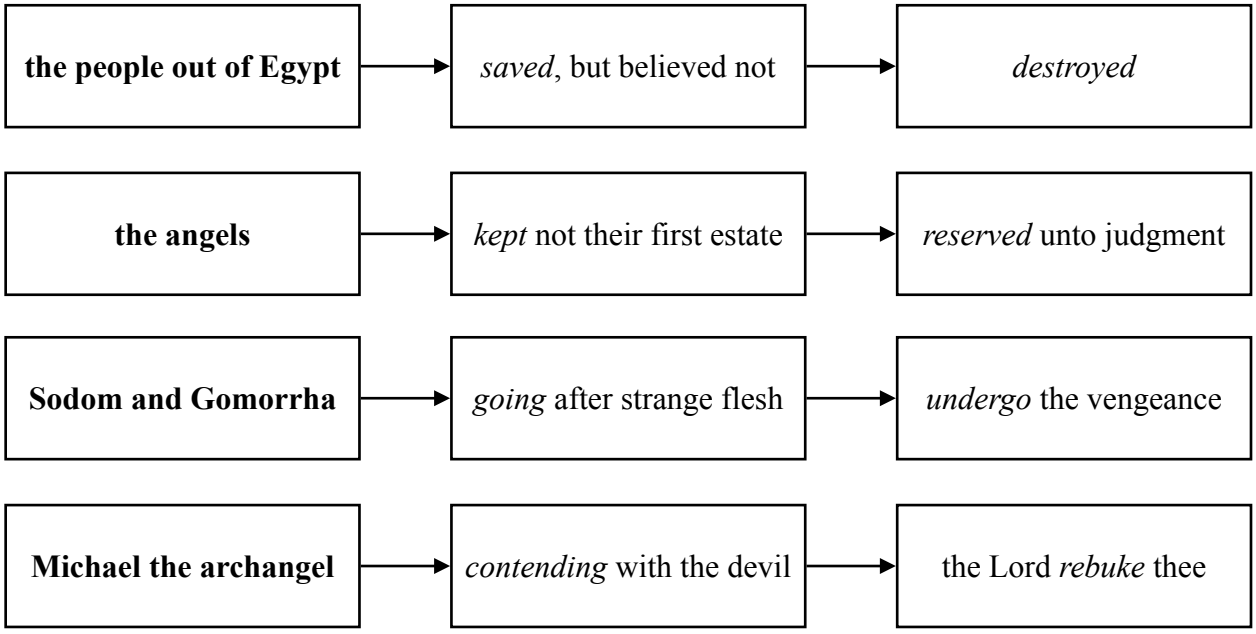


Figure 3. Judgment-crescendo in Jude.

Instead of referring to "the error of Balaam" alone, Jude adds "the way of Cain" and "the gainsaying of Core."[43] Whereas Peter accuses Balaam mainly of loving the wages of unrighteousness, Jude again builds a crescendo of sinful activity culminating in death.

	τῇ ὁδῷ	τοῦ **Κάϊν**	ἐπορεύθησαν,
καὶ	τῇ πλάνῃ	τοῦ **Βαλαὰμ** μισθοῦ	ἐξεχύθησαν,
καὶ	τῇ ἀντιλογίᾳ	τοῦ **Κορὲ**	ἀπώλοντο.[44]

43. Jude 11; cf. 2 Pet. 2:13–16 KJV.

44. Jude 11 Scrivener.

Finally, Jude mentions the prophecy of Enoch, "the seventh from Adam,"[45] instead of "Noah the eighth," in Second Peter.[46] Peter calls Noah a preacher of δικαιοσύνη among the ungodly, whereas Jude presents Enoch as a prophet of κρίσις against the ungodly. The author uses Enoch as the sentence pronouncement in his judicial case against ungodliness.

Whether Jude regarded such writings as the Assumption of Moses and the Book of Enoch as reliable sources is hard to ascertain, and authors have been divided on what his intentions may have been upon quoting from that material. Among the various possible interpretations, some believe Jude may have been guided by the Holy Spirit to include in his epistle only those portions that were true prophecy, and yet others understand his mentions as derogatory in tone and almost satirical.[47] Note, for instance, that Jude alone includes that his opponents are dreamers,[48] as he introduces the narrative of Michael, and admirers of persons,[49] following the prophecy of Enoch. It is possible that the inspired author may have used those sources in a similar manner that Paul had also quoted "a prophet of their own."[50]

In summary, while Second Peter presents his historical references chronologically with an emphasis on the theme of righteousness, Jude reorganizes his material thematically to build his case for judgment against the ungodly, who had not kept the faith. While Peter limits himself to canonical sources, Jude transcends the limits of the Old Testament Scriptures.

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45. Jude 14 KJV.

46. 2 Pet. 2:5 KJV.

47. G. Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*.

48. Jude 8 KJV.

49. Jude 16 KJV.

50. Tit. 1:12 KJV.

Argument: Jude Applies

One major piece of evidence for petrine priority is found in the different approaches to apostolic prophecy in 2 Pet. 3:2, 3 // Jude 17, 18. Compare below how each author introduces the same prophetic message.

Second Peter

μνησθῆναι

- τῶν προειρημένων ῥημάτων ⟶ ὑπὸ τῶν ἁγίων προφητῶν,
- καὶ τῆσ τῶν ἀποστόλων ἡμῶν ⟶ ἐντολῆς τοῦ Κυρίου καὶ σωτῆρος[51]

Jude

μνήσθητε

- τῶν ῥημάτων τῶν προειρημένων
  - ὑπὸ τῶν ἀποστόλων
    - τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ[52]

Peter would have his readers remember a two-fold rule of faith: the predictions of the prophets and the commandments of the apostles. Doctrine of Scriptures is a recurring theme in Second Peter. It is the prophecies of Scriptures that the false prophets of the second chapter are opposing, and Peter argues against them from canonical examples. In the third chapter, Peter argues for a bicovenantal canon of Scriptures:[53] one that includes the Genesis's narrative of the deluge, Isaiah's new heavens and new earth, as well as Paul's hard sayings in his epistles.

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51. 2 Pet. 3:2 Scrivener. The preferred text uses the pronoun ἡμῶν instead of the variant ὑμῶν. This choice may contribute to the force of the argument, yet the present thesis does not depend fully on it.

52. Jude 17 Scrivener.

53. Michael J. Kruger, "2 Peter 3:2, the Apostolate, and a Bi-covenantal Canon," *JETS* 63, no. 1 (2020), 5–24.

Jude, however, does not manifest any special concern for doctrine of Scriptures in his epistle, although he acknowledges that the faith "was once delivered,"[54] presumably through the writings of the prophets and apostles. He simplifies the complexity of Peter's original sentence and also removes the bicovenantal distinction, by associating "the predictions" straight to "the apostles."

Peter includes himself under the label τῶν ἀποστόλων ἡμῶν, that is, "us the apostles," or "ourselves the apostles,"[55] whereas Jude simply has τῶν ἀποστόλων, "the apostles." Moreover, Jude includes the clear quotation formula ὅτι ἔλεγον ὑμῖν, where Peter appears to be simply introducing original teaching with τοῦτο πρῶτον γινώσκοντες, already used elsewhere.[56] Also, Jude adds his thematic word ἀσέβεια "ungodliness"[57] at the end of the sentence, thereby appropriating and applying the prophecy to his own emphasis and context.

Finally, in Jude 19, the author interprets the apostolic prophecy as referring to his opponents. The description of the οὗτοί that is carefully built throughout the text[58] culminates in their identification as the objects of that prophecy. Second Peter, in future tense, paints the picture, but does not solve the riddle. Jude wanted his audience to understand soon that the warnings of Second Peter were real and present in their own circles.

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54. Jude 3 KJV.

55. See note 51 above for clarification on pronoun variants.

56. 2 Pet. 1:20 KJV.

57. Jude 18 KJV.

58. cf. Jude 10, 11, 12, 16 Scrivener.

Conclusion

Second Peter concludes with an exhortation to grow in the knowledge of our Christ. Knowledge for Peter has been delivered in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. The reader of the Bible can have true experiential knowledge of the divine nature by means of the revealed word of prophecy. Peter's recipe for christian perseverance in an era of doubt is a mind filled with biblical teaching, that one may recall it to mind, and therefore have hope.[59]

Jude encourages his audience to keep the faith diligently, a faith that leads to mortification of the flesh. Then and now, he warns his readers that the spiritual battle is real and that "the last time" is here and now. Jude will not let spiritual mediocrity pass. At the same time, he acknowledges that true faith must be built upon the foundation of prayer in the Holy Ghost, since faith is a divine gift.

Peter informed to build hope; Jude applied to raise awareness. Peter spoke of future realities that are already present in the lives of those who live the eschaton, and Jude understood that. Second Peter's [ἐπι-]γνῶσις informs the believer, builds hope, and enables him to keep Jude's πίστις. The Scriptures that in Second Peter deliver that knowledge are interpreted by and with the Holy Spirit in Jude. The way to avoid Jude's κρίσις is by following Second Peter's δικαιοσύνη through our Lord and Savior.

A correct interpretation and wise application of Scriptures is fundamental to the life of the every believer. Jude borrows from, expands upon, and applies Second Peter to his own context and purposes. May we also treasure Scriptures, expand our knowledge thereof, and live by these words of truth.

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59. Lam. 3:21 KJV.

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