

# THE MESSAGE OF 1&2 PETER AND JUDE

*J.K. McKee*

Within the scope of the Apostolic Scriptures, the Gospels tend to be the easiest texts for today's Messianic Believers to understand, with the Pauline Epistles being among the most difficult texts to understand. Somewhere in the middle of this are the Epistles of 1&2 Peter and Jude. Generally speaking, we find these three letters to not be that difficult, but they might ask us some rather unique and poignant questions. Our encounter with 1&2 Peter and Jude is often limited to an important quotation here or there, specifically intended to encourage holy living or a repentant attitude, but we have often not considered the whole scope of what these letters mean together.

It is easy to detect why letters like 1&2 Peter and Jude are classified among the General Epistles: unlike the Pauline letters, it can be a slight challenge to discern a specific situation or controversy that necessitated their composition. On the whole, their main themes are to rhetorically stimulate Messiah followers to emphasize the surety of God's judgment on the unrighteous. Readers of 1&2 Peter and Jude can see how their original audiences knew of potential apostasy from Messiah faith in their midst, and that the message of the good news is most consistent with God's previous revelation delivered in the Tanach Scriptures. This has led various interpreters to think that these letters could have simply been an edited compilation of sayings by either Peter or Jude, possibly composed by a close associate of these early Messianic leaders into an easy to follow letter (or even sermon) form. While a possibility, it is our job to read 1&2 Peter as actual letters, written by the Apostle Peter and Jude the half-brother of Yeshua, to help guide and direct First Century Believers.

The **Epistle of 1 Peter** is the only letter of this set that gives a specific identity of its audience: "To God's elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia" (1 Peter 1:1). This was already a large area of the Mediterranean where the good news had spread to Jews, Greeks, and Romans. The exhortation style of 1 Peter is quite obvious from its outset, as the Lord is given great praise, and its readers and hearers are to stand in awe of the great salvation offered to them, with all its grand historical significance:

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Yeshua the Messiah from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Yeshua the Messiah is revealed. Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls" (1 Peter 1:3-9).

Given the broad recipients of 1 Peter, we do see that some of them had likely been persecuted for their faith, so hearing about the future return of the Messiah and His defeat of their worldly enemies, would surely have been important. Peter's words about the great privileges his readers have, to live in a time when they know that the Messiah has come and provided final atonement, is intensified by his thoughts of how the Prophets who had come before them longed for this season to arrive:

"Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Messiah in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Messiah and the glories that would follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things" (1 Peter 1:10-12).

The emphasis of Peter could not be clearer: in order to understand the gravity of Yeshua's death and resurrection and future return, **one has to understand the Prophets**. He continues, remarking, "prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Yeshua the Messiah is revealed" (1 Peter 1:13). It is not enough for these Believers to simply recognize that the Messiah has died for their sins; they must live it forth in holy actions. Peter says, "As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. 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'" (1 Peter 1:14-15; cf. Leviticus 11:44-45). Living the life of faith required by our Heavenly Father involves a plain recognition that His people live on Earth as strangers and sojourners, different from any sinners who have preceded them, and continually purifying themselves of any residual effects of sin (1 Peter 1:16-25; cf. Isaiah 40:6-8). Such a sacred and steadfast call upon Believers should cause them to most especially "rid [themselves] of all malice and deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind" (1 Peter 2:1). Peter compares Believers to the innocence of newborn babies wanting milk, who then steadily grow up—in this case "grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good" (1 Peter 2:2-3).

The choosing of Peter's audience, as those who have truly made the decision to believe in Israel's Messiah, is to

manifest in them being “like living stones—being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Yeshua the Messiah” (1 Peter 2:5). While this is similar to the Apostle Paul’s analogy of Believers being a living sacrifice (Romans 12) or the Temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19), the Apostle Peter’s vantage point here is to specifically focus on *the service* aspect of God’s people as a company of priests. Yeshua the Messiah is the precious Cornerstone to whom all must turn to be redeemed (1 Peter 2:6-8; cf. Isaiah 28:16; Psalm 118:22; Isaiah 8:14), with disastrous consequences for those who reject Him. Those who are redeemed are to minister to the Lord no differently than those of Ancient Israel. 1 Peter 2:9-10 is a loaded passage that includes a series of direct quotations or allusions to Tanach passages depicting not only the Divine call upon Israel, but also the prophesied restoration of Israel’s Kingdom in the end-times:

**“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”**

Here are some of the main Tanach passages quoted in 1 Peter 2:9-10, appearing in order:<sup>1</sup>

- “For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession” (Deuteronomy 7:6).
- “Yet the LORD set his affection on your forefathers and loved them, and he chose you, their descendants, above all the nations, as it is today” (Deuteronomy 10:15).
- “[Y]ou will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites” (Exodus 19:6).
- “And you will be called priests of the LORD, you will be named ministers of our God. You will feed on the wealth of nations, and in their riches you will boast” (Isaiah 61:6).
- “[T]he people I formed for myself that they may proclaim my praise” (Isaiah 43:21).
- “But as for you, the LORD took you and brought you out of the iron-smelting furnace, out of Egypt, to be the people of his inheritance, as you now are” (Deuteronomy 4:20).
- “[F]or you are a people holy to the LORD your God. Out of all the peoples on the face of the earth, the LORD has chosen you to be his treasured possession” (Deuteronomy 14:2).
- “I will plant her for myself in the land; I will show my love to the one I called ‘Not my loved one.’ I will say to those called ‘Not my people,’ ‘You are my people’; and they will say, ‘You are my God’” (Hosea 2:23).

This is a most significant list of Tanach passages, which largely detail the Divine mission that Ancient Israel was to fulfill in being a beacon of God’s holiness and righteousness to the nations. Of course among these passages appear references, most notably Hosea 2:23, which foretell of the restoration of Israel in the Last Days. The role that 1 Peter 2:9-10 has for today’s emerging Messianic movement, and what it specifically communicates, is one which is most important. **Not only are we to be a holy people who faithfully serve the Lord in the world**, but it cannot be avoided that the Apostle Peter applied a prophecy of the exiled Northern Kingdom of Israel/Ephraim coming back to Him to a mixed audience of Jewish and non-Jewish Believers (cf. 1 Peter 1:1, 14; 4:3). But whereas many of today’s populist Two-House teachers would just rush off and conclude that Peter’s non-Jewish audience were “Ephraimites” of some sort, the focus of Peter himself is on *the vocational calling of Israel*—which is not limited to his own Jewish people exclusively, or the nations. He applies a restoration of Israel prophecy, in the process of being fulfilled, to non-Jewish Believers—but more in the sense of all Believers being participants involved in it. The ethical and moral aspects of this are more imperative:

“Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us” (1 Peter 2:11-12).

Whether you look at “the day of visitation” (NASU) as the future return of the Messiah, or simply a distinct time or season when God’s presence is known, the critical point is that **His people are to have prepared the way for others’ salvation** via their upstanding conduct and good works! For Peter’s audience living in the Roman Empire, those would have meant a proper submission to governmental authorities (1 Peter 2:13-17), and for any believing slaves to be committed to endure against unjust suffering if they must, because Yeshua Himself was unjustly beaten (1 Peter 2:18-21; cf. Isaiah 53:9). To a degree, in emulation of the Messiah Yeshua, should Believers have to face persecution and death, they are to ultimately not resist:

“When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live to righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but now have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls” (1 Peter 2:22-25).

The main thrust emphasized by the Apostle Peter here is that it is ultimately God the Father to whom Believers must turn to provide final vindication, should they at all have to experience martyrdom (cf. Revelation 6:10).

Another area of submission mentioned by Peter concerns that of wives to husbands, specifically in terms of what is to take place when a wife is a Believer and a husband is not. A wife is to see her husband led to the Lord by her good conduct and steadfast spirit (1 Peter 3:1-6). Husbands are to also be considerate to their wives, treating them with respect and with

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<sup>1</sup> Aland, *GNT*, pp 788-789.

their full support (1 Peter 3:7). Within the community of faith as a whole, Peter admonishes, “all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing” (1 Peter 3:8-9; cf. 3:10-12; Psalm 34:12-16). Suffering for the good that one does is not something to be frightened of, given the complete victory that Believers possess in the Messiah Yeshua (1 Peter 3:13-22). Suffering is attested by Peter to be of value, specifically because it will focus one’s attention off of potential sinful habits and onto the Judge of all humanity:

“Therefore, since Messiah suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin. As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God. For you have spent enough time in the past doing what the pagans chose to do—living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry. They think it strange that you do not plunge with them into the same flood of dissipation, and they heap abuse on you. But they will have to give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead” (1 Peter 4:1-5).

The reality of knowing that “The end of all things is near” (or as the CJB puts it, “The accomplishing of the goal of all things”) is to motivate God’s people to the right action (1 Peter 4:7a). This includes self-control, love for others, hospitality, and employing one’s spiritual gifts appropriately (1 Peter 4:8-10). Peter emphasizes, “If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God” (1 Peter 4:11a), because what Messiah followers communicate should ultimately bring honor and glory to Him (1 Peter 4:11b). While readers can surely debate how near or far away the End of the Age actually is, there can be no debate that we find ourselves in the final stage of history before the Messianic Kingdom. With this reality, comes the sober truth that suffering, insults, and false accusations will come against Yeshua’s followers (1 Peter 4:12-18).

The final series of instructions delivered in 1 Peter largely pertains to how elders are to properly manage the flock of God, as they are to avoid the temptations of money, be eager to serve, and not be domineering those who look to them for guidance (1 Peter 5:1-4). Young persons are to be submissive to those who are older (1 Peter 5:5a), with all in the assembly being humble (1 Peter 5:5b-6-7; cf. Proverbs 3:34). Most poignant is recognizing that the Adversary is looking for an opportunity to strike against Believers, doubtlessly requiring that people of faith *maintain their faith*:

“Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings” (1 Peter 5:8-9).

The Apostle Peter closes his first letter by reminding his readers that should they suffer, the Lord Himself will restore them as He is the ultimate and eternal Power (1 Peter 5:10-11). Final greetings from Silas, who helped him compose the letter are extended (1 Peter 5:12). While Peter does say, “She who is in Babylon...sends you her greetings,” this is a rather elusive phrase (1 Peter 5:13a), and is most probably a reference to Peter being present in Rome, which was a city that surely embodied all of the wicked characteristics of Ancient Babylon. Mark was also with Peter at the time of writing (1 Peter 5:13b). The letter ends with an issuance of peace to the Believers (1 Peter 5:14).

While the **Epistles of 2 Peter and Jude** certainly have some similar content to 1 Peter, when reading these two letters together it is almost unavoidable that they quantitatively address the same problem: namely, false brethren and apostasy against the Lord which are to be judged by Him. It is most frequent to see commentaries where 2 Peter and Jude are combined together, not only because of the shortness of the Epistle of Jude at only twenty-five verses, but also because of the overlap in subject matter. This has spurred discussions among interpreters as to which letter was composed first—2 Peter or Jude, or vice versa—with theologians divided. One letter presents the problems discussed at an early stage, and then another presents the problems at a more advanced stage. Good arguments for either 2 Peter or Jude being written first, followed by the other, have been made by those who hold these letters to be genuine works originating from the Apostle Peter and Jude the half-brother of the Lord. For our purposes of intending to simply summarize the key intent of 1&2 Peter and Jude, we will look at 2 Peter first, followed by Jude.

No specific audience is stated by name in the text of **2 Peter**, but it can be safely assumed that it was likely the same basic recipients in Asia Minor who received 1 Peter. They are surely among those who “have received a faith as precious as ours,” who are to be growing “in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Yeshua our Lord” (2 Peter 1:1, 2). It is often asserted by examiners of the letter that the audience was most likely under the threat of influence by either incipient or proto-Gnostic beliefs. The tone we can detect from what is composed is that the author knows he does not have that much longer to live, and that some bad things are likely to come into the faith community after he dies. The recipients of 2 Peter are reminded of the severity of judgment that will come upon evil workers, and to not only beware of them, but to instead follow the right path of trust in God.

The opening greeting of 2 Peter extends into an almost doxology of detailing the great power and majesty of God, as the Apostle declares, “His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires” (2 Peter 1:3-4). The audience has already received redemption through the good news of Yeshua, and via the reconciliation they have with the Father they have access to all they need to experience who He is. The main things that they are to make sure that they possess in their lives, are to be manifested in the way that they think and act in actual day to day situations:

“For this reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive

in your knowledge of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah. But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins” (2 Peter 1:5-9).

These would certainly be key words delivered against an environment where Messiah followers could possibly be tempted to be influenced by various mystery cults, or by those within the assembly who had false teachings or aberrant/heretical ideas about God and His salvation. *Make sure you are being ever-molded and transformed by the power of God’s love.* And as Peter so directly states: “Without these qualities you can’t see what’s right before you, oblivious that your old sinful life has been wiped off the books” (2 Peter 1:9, The Message). If the Believers can make the effort to always put their own way of sinfully living and thinking behind them, then as Peter says, “your calling and election” will be sure. “For if you do these things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Yeshua the Messiah” (2 Peter 1:10-11). Peter has confidence that his audience will do this, remarking, “So I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have. I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live...” (2 Peter 1:12-13a).

We do not get the impression from the letter that Peter has that much longer to live, as he knows that his time to depart is nearing (2 Peter 1:13b-14). He urges his readers, “I will make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to remember these things” (2 Peter 1:15), and so this epistle encapsulates a rather direct message about problems that he witnessed in the First Century, which needed to be identified and avoided at all costs. The Apostle Peter asserts that he was one of the original eyewitnesses of Messiah Yeshua’s ministry, that he accomplished the expectation of the Prophets, and that his hearers are to be very skeptical of anyone who claims to be a prophet:

“We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, ‘This is my son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.’ We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain. And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:16-21).

Quite contrary to how genuine prophets of God were guided by His Spirit, Peter issues a warning that false prophets are sure to come—just as they have always been present. They will make up silly and fabricated stories, but their final condemnation and judgment are to be assured (2 Peter 2:1-3). It can be quite disconcerting, and even depressing, to know that the false teachers, prophets, and various other figures will enter in among God’s faithful. So to reassure his audience that these individuals do not escape the notice of God, Peter substantiates his remarks with ancient examples of His judgment, including punishment issued upon: angels (2 Peter 2:4), sinners at the time of Noah’s Flood (2 Peter 2:5), and the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah (2 Peter 2:6). God rescued Lot from out of the judgment (2 Peter 2:7-8), and so will He rescue His own righteous people from out of any terrible circumstances they face (2 Peter 2:9a).

At the same time, Peter details how the Lord “will hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment. This is especially true of those who follow the corrupt desire of the sinful nature and despise authority” (2 Peter 2:9b-10a). The judgment of the unrighteous begins as soon as they die, and they enter into Hell, awaiting the final trial before their Creator at the second resurrection (cf. Revelation 20:13). They are rightly described as utter blasphemers, the only valid point of comparison to them being like wild animals (2 Peter 2:10b-12). Their sinful behavior, attitudes, and activities should be self-evident to those watching and making keen observations:

“They will be paid back for the harm they have done. Their idea of pleasure is to carouse in broad daylight. They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their pleasures while they feast with you. With eyes full of adultery, they never stop sinning; they seduce the unstable; they are experts in greed—an accursed brood! They have left the straight way and wandered off to follow the way of Balaam son of Beor, who loved the ways of wickedness. But he was rebuked for his wrongdoing by a donkey—a beast without speech—who spoke with a man’s voice and restrained the prophet’s madness. These men are springs without water and mists driven by a storm. Blackest darkness is reserved for them” (2 Peter 2:13-17).

The true severity and surety of God’s judgment on the false teachers and leaders of whom Peter speaks is quite severe, when recognized that they deliberately go after those who are largely new Believers committed to a path of holiness. In an ancient context, new Believers recently having left paganism are considered to be easy targets:

“For they mouth empty, boastful words and, by appealing to the lustful desires of sinful human nature, they entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error. They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity—for a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him. If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Yeshua the Messiah and are again entangled in it and overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning. It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then turn their backs on the sacred command that was passed on to them” (2 Peter 2:18-21).

This same occurrence, most sadly, has been witnessed throughout history to the present. People come to saving faith in the Messiah, and then are led astray, having been captivated by various messages that have taken them off of the right course of the gospel. Even in today’s Messianic community, to an extent, we see people sincerely convicted of the relevance of the Torah and Messianic lifestyle, and then early on they are led down inappropriate paths by various false teachers and peddlers of materials that promise a quick answer to their questions. Most frequently, these are teachers who focus a great deal of attention on what they deliberately overplay as the ills of the historic Christian Church, with all Christians

throughout history falsely portrayed as being lawless pagans. Certainly while there are many black spots on the historic Church, particularly in terms of its relations with Judaism, there are also many millions of Christian Believers to whom today's Messianic movement is indebted—who greatly valued the Law of Moses as a guide for holy living and good works. We need to guard ourselves against any teachings that have been purposefully oversimplified, *on any topic*, so none of us ever fall into what Peter warns about in 2 Peter 2:18-21. As he further states,

“Of them the proverbs are true: ‘A dog returns to its own vomit,’ and, ‘A sow that is washed goes back to her wallowing in the mud’” (2 Peter 2:22; cf. Proverbs 26:11).

The Apostle Peter is not someone who is going to lead his audience astray, unlike any false teachers who have secretly entered in. He informs them how “this is my second letter to you. I have written both of them as reminders to stimulate you to wholesome thinking.” This thought continues with his admonishment, “I want you to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Savior through your apostles” (2 Peter 3:1, 2). The first thought that Peter issues is about those who will mock the future Second Coming of the Messiah:

“First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, ‘Where is this ‘coming’ he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation’” (2 Peter 3:3-4).

Those who have questioned a literal return of the Messiah to Planet Earth have been present with us since Peter originally communicated this. In our generation, we need to be especially careful not to mock the Second Coming, because in light of the many false predictions and prognostications present in either Christianity or the Messianic movement, there can be a tendency to *unfocus* oneself from the reality of our Lord's coming. A fair-minded approach to remembering that Yeshua's return is always on the horizon, but that we need not fall into the traps of either exclusively focusing on end-time prophecy or ignoring it, must be adapted for a healthy and effective Body of Messiah. In the specific case of Peter's audience, the trap was avoiding those who would mock and deride the sure prophetic message of the Holy Scriptures (2 Peter 3:5-13). A proper approach to what is to come is to manifest in blameless and peaceful living (2 Peter 3:14).

At the close of 2 Peter appears a very interesting remark from the author, which alludes to the writings of the Apostle Paul. The Apostle Peter considers him to be a “dear brother” who certainly writes “with the wisdom that God gave him” (2 Peter 3:15). He affirms that Paul is a fellow servant of Yeshua along with him, but reminds his audience of how “His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction” (2 Peter 3:16). As Messianics who believe in the continued validity of the Torah for God's people, much of the discussion and controversy over Romans 10:4—and whether *telos* should be understood as “end,” or something closer to “goal” (Common English Bible) or “culmination” (TNIV)—can easily come to mind. Peter affirms that Paul's works have authority for the Body of Messiah, but there are those who deliberately misinterpret him, the same as they do for the rest of the Scriptures. The distinct impression is that Paul is interpreted as being anti-Law, when he is probably instead emphasizing how faith in Yeshua is to be the most important to Believers (2 Peter 3:17).

The Epistle of 2 Peter ends on an important note: “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Yeshua the Messiah. To him be glory both now and forevermore! Amen” (2 Peter 3:18).

Encountering the shortness, directness, and bluntness of the **Epistle of Jude** leads many interpreters to conclude that the problems detailed in 2 Peter, have intensified at some point in the late First Century C.E.<sup>2</sup> Its author identifies himself as “Jude, a servant of Yeshua the Messiah and a brother of James” (Jude 1a), which would make him among the younger siblings of the Lord (Mark 6:3). After greeting his audience with “Mercy, peace and love be yours in abundance” (Jude 2), he proceeds to examine the problem that he sees. While no specific audience is detailed, if Jude was composed after 2 Peter, then it is most likely that those who received the letter were from the vicinity of Asia Minor, which is where one of the largest concentrations of Believers were located at the time. Jude mentions how while he would like to talk about the common salvation they have in Yeshua, there is an urgency to discuss the significance of the faith:

“Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints. For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Yeshua the Messiah our only Sovereign and Lord” (Jude 3-4).

Jude's message is short, as whomever these false teachers, false prophets, false voices, and deliberate deceivers were—are described in comparison to God's previous acts of severe judgment on His enemies. With this, one witnesses overlap with 2 Peter ch. 2. Jude describes how God judged Ancient Egypt at the time of the Exodus (Jude 5), angels during the time of the Flood (Jude 6), and Sodom and Gomorrah as a small warning of eternal punishment to come (Jude 7). These ungodly persons out there slander both authority and the supernatural, and can be rightly compared to unreasoning beasts (Jude 8-10). Jude considers them to be no better than Cain or those who perished in Korah's rebellion (Jude 11). His summary of how to look out for these sordid evildoers is well taken:

“These men are blemishes at your love feasts, eating with you without the slightest qualm—shepherds who feed only themselves. They are clouds without rain, blow along by the wind; autumn trees, without fruit and uprooted—twice dead. They are wild waves of the sea, foaming up their shame; wandering stars, for whom the blackest darkness has been reserved forever” (Jude 12-13).

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<sup>2</sup> Do note how there are some interpreters of 2 Peter and Jude who think that Jude was written first, and that its warning had to be “toned down” a bit by the calmer approach of 2 Peter.

Jude 14-15 has always been a verse of great controversy in Biblical Studies, because when one takes a conservative approach to the letter's composition, it is clear that its author has quoted a non-canonical work. Referencing the First Century B.C.E. work *1 Enoch*, Jude says, "Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men: 'See the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him'" (Jude 14-15). The tenor of this statement, which the author of Jude treats as being authentic to Enoch, is consistent with Zechariah 14:5,<sup>3</sup> although the role of angels is specified to be one of judgment. While the role of *1 Enoch* being referenced will undoubtedly remain a huge debate, commentators are often keen to emphasize that this is not the only place where a non-canonical text is quoted in the Scriptures, and indeed in various places the Apostle Paul makes light of various pagan philosophies (Acts 17:28; 1 Corinthians 15:33; Titus 1:12).

A quotation from *1 Enoch* need not imply a wholesale endorsement of this pseudepigraphal work (especially given the likelihood of significant edits to it within history). The role it plays within Jude's letter and in motivating his audience to beware of false voices is what is imperative, as he continues by stating, "These men and grumblers and faultfinders; they follow their own evil desires; they boast about themselves and flatter others for their own advantage" (Jude 16). The role that Messiah followers are to have is to be consciously aware of sinners in their midst, continuing in the love and mercy of God, and eagerly rescue people who fall into corruption:

"But, dear friends, remember what the apostles of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah foretold. They said to you, 'In the last times there will be scoffers who follow their own ungodly desires.' These are the men who divide you, who follow mere natural instincts and do not have the Spirit. But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in the most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit. Keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah to bring you to eternal life. Be merciful to those who doubt; snatch others from the fire and save them; to others show mercy, mixed with fear—hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh" (Jude 17-23).

As bad as insidious influences might be, Jude's word is missional: "some of you must save [sinners] by snatching them out of the fire" (Jude 23, Phillips New Testament). How this is done requires significant discernment, as well as the right temperament. There are surely moments when God's people need to rise up, and speak directly to a situation when there is error present that is not going to stop! As Jude's short letter concludes, he recognizes that most of his readers will not fall prey into temptation, and they will be strong and powerful through the Lord and His Messiah (Jude 24-25).

Compared to some of the other letters of the Apostolic Scriptures, 1&2 Peter and Jude do not immediately strike you as requiring a great deal of background or location-specific data, **as much as they simply challenge Believers to greater holiness and strength in the Lord.** While there might be a tendency to think that 1&2 Peter and Jude are easier to read, when compared to letters like Romans or Galatians, we should not at all think this. Rather than dealing with some of the emerging controversies of Jewish and non-Jewish inclusion in the *ekklēsia*, 1&2 Peter and Jude reveals the need for a Body of Messiah always on guard against extreme error, and eschewing the temptations of the world. These epistles affirm that God's final judgment not only upon sinners—but most especially those who will instigate sin and unrighteousness among His people—will definitely come. These letters give today's emerging Messianic movement some critical things to think about, as we often do not consider that false teachers and false voices could crop up in our midst. Just as the Apostle Peter directs, there can never be an over-emphasis on the foundational concepts of love and holiness present in the community of faith (2 Peter 1:5-11), as the Father has given us *everything we need* in His Son. *May we go forth and demonstrate such an imperative!*

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<sup>3</sup> "You will flee by my mountain valley, for it will extend to Azel. You will flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the LORD my God will come, and all the holy ones with him" (Zechariah 14:5).