

JUDE

FOR BEGINNERS

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bibleTalk^{TV}

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1. **INTRODUCTION**

Jude is one of the shortest epistles in the New Testament but contains a tremendous amount of teaching and ideas for its size. In our study we will examine the identity of its author and the circumstances in which it was written. Our goal here will be to summarize the reasons why the book was written and what it said to the people of that time and, by extension, to the present generation as well.

JUDE – THE MAN

Jude names himself in the first verse and says that he is the brother of James. The fact that he assumes his readers will know who James is suggests that it is James, one of the leaders of the Jerusalem church and the writer of the epistle of James. This would make Jude another brother of Jesus. Matthew 13:55 names Jesus' earthly brothers as James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas (which is another form of the name Jude).

Along with his other brothers, he also did not believe while Jesus was ministering and must have been converted after the resurrection for he was with the Apostles in the upper room on Pentecost Sunday (Acts 1:14).

Church historian Eusebius wrote that Jude, the brother of Jesus, suffered the arrest of his grandsons during the Roman persecution. They told the emperor that they were farmers, and that the kingdom of Jesus was not of this world but the next world when Jesus would return to judge everyone.

Little else is known of Jude or his work.

JUDE – THE EPISTLE

There are similarities between Jude's epistle and the second chapter of II Peter (see Jude 6 and II Peter 2:4). This has led to the conclusion that during the period when various heresies were entering into the church, Peter wrote II Peter in order to refute this false doctrine.

Jude had intended to write an epistle with a broad theme (salvation in Christ – verse 3), but when he recognized the threat to the church after reading Peter's second letter, he wrote this shorter and more pointed epistle concerning the same subject that Peter was writing about. There has been no

doubt about the authorship by Jude of this letter and the subject matter suggests that it was written around the same time or slightly later than II Peter, 67 AD.

It took a while for the letter to be accepted into the New Testament canon because of its brevity and the fact that it refers to non-inspired sources (Enoch, the Book of Moses). Eventually its authenticity and soundness were recognized and accepted as inspired material. Jude's goal in this letter was to exhort the church not to depart from the established teachings of Christ and the Apostles and move to the false teachings of the Gnostics.

From his writings we conclude that there existed in the 1st century a body of Christian doctrine that was recognized as authoritative and complete for the purposes of evangelization and teaching, and which was not to be added to or changed in any way.

We, in the churches of Christ, believe that this body of doctrine was recorded and preserved in the Bible and, as Jude wrote in his epistle, we are careful to teach, preserve, and pass on this body of doctrine to the next generation and encourage them to do the same until Jesus comes.

This approach to Scripture is unique to our brotherhood and is one of the important ways that we are different from our neighbors in other religious groups.

2. **OUTLINE**

Jude's letter focuses on the danger of following or teaching things which are false and so the outline follows this theme.

- I. Salutation – vs. 1-2
- II. The danger at hand – vs. 3-4
- III. The dangerous men – vs. 5-16
- IV. How to avoid danger – vs. 17-23
- V. Doxology – vs. 24-25

Salutation – vs. 1-2

Vs. 1-2 – Jude, a bond-servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, To those who are the called, beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ: May mercy and peace and love be multiplied to you.

The name Jude could be a form of common names of that era (Judas or Jacob) that the writer changed for obvious reasons. He claims to be a “bond servant” or slave of Christ and brother of James. This is an indirect way of referring to his other relationship with Jesus as His earthly brother.

We know that James was killed by the Jews in 66 AD and this letter may have been Jude’s attempt to step into his brother’s place as one of the leaders of the church in Jerusalem.

He refers to the church in three ways:

1. The called (*eklesia*) or the called out. Originally a term used for the elders or leaders of a city who were “chosen” or “called out” to occupy that position. Jesus took this term and applied it to those who were called out of the world by the gospel and became His people, the church. Ultimately the term *eklesia* was used exclusively in reference to the church.
2. Beloved in God the Father. These people have a new status in regards to God, they are no longer condemned sinners and enemies of God because of disbelief. They are now beloved, cherished, a special loved group by God.
3. Kept for Jesus. God’s hand is protecting these people from the second death, from condemnation and punishment so that they can be with Jesus forever when He comes. Their end will be different than the destiny of others, they are kept aside for heaven.

After this introduction and greeting he moves on to the matter before them.

The Danger at Hand – vs. 3-4

³ Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints. ⁴ For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

He begins by sharing the motivation behind his writing to them. His original thought was to write them a summary of the Christian faith and encourage them to preserve and pass it on. It seems that he changed the substance of his letter and redirected the thought to deal with some of the issues that Peter dealt with in his second epistle. This was the influence of the Gnostic teachers and doctrine in the church.

The persons he mentions are the teachers who have crept in to teach these things in the church. That they were marked and judged beforehand is a reference to Peter's epistle and denunciation of these people (II Peter 2:1-ff).

Their sin is that according to their teachings, anything done in the body has no effect on the soul. This idea led to all kinds of immoral behavior (effectively turning the idea of God's grace into permission to do anything you wanted). The net result of this kind of thinking and lifestyle was to grossly disrespect the fact that Jesus sacrificed His body in death to obtain forgiveness for the very things these teachers were promoting.

In the end the false teachers were found guilty of denying Christ, and the danger for those who followed them was that they would be guilty of the same sin.

The Dangerous Men – vs. 5-16

⁵ Now I desire to remind you, though you know all things once for all, that the Lord, after saving a people out of the land of Egypt, subsequently destroyed those who did not believe. ⁶ And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day,

Jude gives examples of what happened to various individuals who disobeyed or disbelieved.

1. **The Israelites** – they were God’s people, freed from slavery in a miraculous way. However, when they disbelieved and rebelled, God destroyed them in the desert. From that generation only Joshua and Caleb made it to the Promised Land.
2. **The angels** – angels who are more powerful beings than human were also punished when some rebelled against God. They each were created and placed at a certain station, rule or dominion in the spiritual world (Ephesians 1:21; Colossians 1:16). However, some were dissatisfied with their place and desired a position not available to them and were punished for their pride.

We do not know the details of this rebellion, only that it happened and the results. Some think their “sin” is connected to angels taking wives referred to in Genesis 6.

¹ Now it came about, when men began to multiply on the face of the land, and daughters were born to them, ² that the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves, whomever they chose. ³ Then the Lord said, "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, because he also is flesh; nevertheless his days shall be one hundred and twenty years." ⁴ The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men, and they bore children to them. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown.
- Genesis 6:1-4

This theory suggests that in doing so they created a race of "super" type humans who led a rush to wickedness that resulted in the flood, an early attempt by Satan to destroy humans and avoid the coming of Christ.

THE CITIES OF SODOM AND GOMORRAH

⁷ just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they in the same way as these indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh, are exhibited as an example in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire.

Because of their disobedience of God's law concerning sexual conduct, they were also destroyed by fire.

The point Jude is making here is that regardless of the being: whether it is a saved person like the Israelites; or a spiritual being like an angel; or a pagan people like the citizens of Sodom and Gomorrah; or, by extension a Christian who denies Christ somehow, if you disobey God's command, deny God's Savior or disbelieve His Word, you will be punished and destroyed.

Now Jude turns his attention to the false teachers themselves and describes the manner in which they operate and the sins they commit in their quest to capture souls.

⁸ Yet in the same way these men, also by dreaming, defile the flesh, and reject authority, and revile angelic majesties. ⁹ But Michael the archangel, when he disputed with the devil and argued about the body of Moses, did not dare pronounce against him a railing judgment, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!" ¹⁰ But these men revile the things which they do not understand; and the things which they know by instinct, like unreasoning animals, by these things they are destroyed.

The things these false teachers teach have no basis in authority (such as Apostolic teaching or divine inspiration). Their work is a result of nothing more than their imagination (dreaming). The results of their "dreaming" however, is threefold:

- A. They cause men to defile their flesh (immoral behavior).
- B. They reject the authority of Christ and His Word over them.
- C. They insult angelic beings who are greater than they are with their attitude and teachings (perhaps teaching incorrectly about angels).

Jude cites an inspired example of what angels are really like and how they act in regards to respect for Christ. In a situation where Michael would have reason to pronounce judgment on Satan, he restrains himself and defers to Christ's judgment knowing that this is not his place but only Christ's.

These men, these teachers, however, have no such restraint, no such respect for the Lord and act like animals (following not

reason or revelation) but their feelings (instinct) will end up like animals who are oblivious to the fact that they are being fattened for the purpose of slaughter. God permits their disobedience and rebellion so there will be no question that their punishment will be justified when it comes.

¹¹ Woe to them! For they have gone the way of Cain, and for pay they have rushed headlong into the error of Balaam, and perished in the rebellion of Korah.

Jude names other infamous people who, like false teachers, faced condemnation and punishment for following unrighteousness. For example, Cain was ostracized for his sin; Balaam was a false prophet who led the Israelites to idolatry and was later killed for his treachery; the sons of Korah rebelled against Moses' authority and were swallowed up by the earth (Numbers 16:1). These false teachers will all be destroyed like their predecessors.

¹² These are the men who are hidden reefs in your love feasts when they feast with you without fear, caring for themselves; clouds without water, carried along by winds; autumn trees without fruit, doubly dead, uprooted; ¹³ wild waves of the sea, casting up their own shame like foam; wandering stars, for whom the black darkness has been reserved forever.

Jude rebukes them for their sins and basically points out how worthless they are:

- A. Reefs that present the unseen danger in what seems like the calm water of congregational life.
- B. Waterless clouds, promising much but delivering nothing.

- C. Fruitless trees that require care but produce nothing and are worth nothing.
- D. Waves that make noise and produce only their shameful deeds as a result.
- E. Not fixed stars that are of some use but wandering stars that will be swallowed by the blackness of hell.

So, Jude delivers a stinging attack on the value and character of the ones advocating the false teaching and immoral and unfaithful lifestyle that it fosters.

¹⁴ It was also about these men that Enoch, in the seventh generation from Adam, prophesied, saying, "Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of His holy ones, ¹⁵ to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him."

He then goes to an unusual source for a prophecy against such people and how they will be punished. So far he has referred to the Old Testament and to Peter's epistle, now he goes to the book of Enoch as a basis for how God will treat the likes of these false teachers.

NB. Book of Enoch:

Enoch was the 7th generation from Adam and as Genesis 5:21-27 says, he was a prophet of God for his generation; he was the father of Methuselah, and he did not suffer death but was taken up by God.

Enoch's prophecies were handed down verbally and then in written form so that the Jews in the 1st century had access to them in some way. Even though Enoch's words or book were

not sufficiently accessible or complete to be included in the Old Testament canon, it seems that Jude, as an inspired writer, used a portion of his ancient prophecies to apply to these men. Enoch spoke of the end times when God would judge all evil men and Jude uses this to apply to these particular evil men.

Why he used Enoch's words, we do not know. We do know, however, that the words fit the occasion. (Perhaps to show that their type was always known even in antiquity and their end predicted.)

¹⁶ These are grumblers, finding fault, following after their own lusts; they speak arrogantly, flattering people for the sake of gaining an advantage.

Verse 16 is a bridge to the final section of the letter where he will address the faithful and encourage them. In this verse he describes the character and style of these men and will go on to encourage them not to emulate their actions.

HOW TO AVOID DANGER – VS. 17-23

¹⁷ But you, beloved, ought to remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁸ that they were saying to you, "In the last time there will be mockers, following after their own ungodly lusts." ¹⁹ These are the ones who cause divisions, worldly-minded, devoid of the Spirit.

Heed the warnings of your teachers. Jesus' Apostles warned of these trials and temptations at other times (Paul in Acts 20; Peter in II Peter 3:3).

²⁰ But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, ²¹ keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life.

Build yourselves up spiritually. Be proactive through prayer. Maintain the love of God among yourselves. Persevere in waiting for the Lord. Do not get distracted by sin. The Lord will come.

²² And have mercy on some, who are doubting;
²³ save others, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh.

Help those who are weak in faith. Try to bring those who are being carried away back to faith but do not get too close to their sin lest you get carried away too.

There is danger but you can do something about it for yourself and for others.

3.

DOXOLOGY

²⁴ Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, ²⁵ to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

A doxology is a spontaneous burst of praise. Jude ends his letter with praise for God and His Son Jesus Christ.

- A. He praises Him for His ability to keep us from stumbling (falling down into ignorance and sin). He does this by providing His Word and Spirit to guide and strengthen us.

- B. He praises Him for His work in bringing us to God. Without Christ we come before God as condemned sinners. Christ sheds His blood and brings us into God's presence as forgiven, holy, as sons and daughters. He brings us in this state to rejoice before God forever. Only He can do this.

Jude says that Jesus who accomplishes this and God the Father who offers it, deserve glory (praise); majesty; dominion (rulership); authority (judgment); and rightly deserves all these things forever.

He closes with the usual "Amen."

Jude points out the false teachers, reveals their sins, warns about their punishment, and encourages the saints to continue faithfully following the teachings given them by the Apostles. If they do, he says, they will receive the blessings of heaven, as surely as the false teachers will receive the punishments of hell.

4. **LESSONS**

In closing I want to reemphasize the important fact that Jude appeals to his readers to follow the set “body of doctrine” that was already present and distributed throughout the church and considered “authoritative” by the Apostles and church leaders at that time! His appeal in this letter was to hold on to that standard of teaching which was complete and non-negotiable.

Even today, 2,000 years later, we in the churches of Christ hold to this idea that the entire body of basic doctrine concerning Christianity was recorded and preserved in the 1st century. This is why we emphasize the idea that our task in teaching the Scriptures is not to change, add, or subtract from this body of doctrine but rather it is to:

UNDERSTAND

We study to understand precisely what the writers were saying to their readers, the 1st century church. This is why there is emphasis on the meaning of the original languages and context of what was being said. We want to understand in English in our day what was being said in Hebrew and Greek thousands of years ago.

OBEY

Once we have understood in context the teaching of Scripture, we want to apply accurately what was being taught in our own lives today. The Scriptures were given by God for people of every age, but it requires some effort to make sure that we apply correctly today the instructions and concepts communicated two to four thousand years ago.

However, once we do grasp the meaning, we want to obey the things God has given us in His word.

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.
(Matthew 28:19-20)

PASS IT ON

Once we have understood and begun to apply these things in our lives as Christians, we begin not only teaching others this “body of doctrine,” we also teach them to pass on this cycle of learning, obeying, passing on.

The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

- II Timothy 2:2

This is why we have training classes, why we take a long time to select elders and preachers, teachers, and deacons. They must be ones who are able not only to understand and themselves put into practice; they must also be able to instill in others the desire and ability to pass this treasure (the Word) on.

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