

Jude

by Ross Callaghan

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- Author** *Jude, a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, and a brother of James.* 1:1
Jude was one of Jesus' brothers, along with James, the author of the Letter of James. (Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3). This is not the same Jude who was one of the Apostles (also called Thaddaeus).
There is a lot of similarity between Jude and 2 Peter, especially Jude 1:4-16 and 2 Peter 2:1-18. Peter may have borrowed from Jude in writing his letter, leaving out references to the non-canonical works *The assumption of Moses*, and *The Book of Enoch*) that Jude used.
- Written to** *Those who have been called, who are loved by God the Father and kept by Jesus Christ.* 1:2 Jude's letter is thus relevant for all Christians.
- Date** Somewhere between AD 66-90.
- Type** General letter to be circulated and read in churches.
- Theme** Perseverance in the truth.
- Purposes**
- to encourage Christians to stand firm, grow in their faith and contend for the truth.
 - to condemn false teachers who reject Christ's authority.
 - to show that Jesus Christ is Lord; now and forever.

Key verses

I... urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints. 1:3

Outline

Greeting 1.1-1.2

Jude greets Christians *who have been called; who are loved by God the Father, and kept by Jesus Christ.* *Mercy peace and love be yours in abundance.* 1:2

Judgement on godless teachers 1:3-16

Jude begins by explaining why he is writing the letter. He urges Christians to *contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints.* 1:3 They are to do this because godless men had infiltrated the Church and were changing the grace of God to a promotion of immorality, and denying that Jesus Christ was *Sovereign and Lord.* 1:4

Jude then strongly attacks the false teachers. He calls them *godless* 1:4; *dreamers who pollute their own bodies; reject authority and slander celestial beings.* 1:8; men *who speak abusively against whatever they do not understand, and what things they do understand by instinct, like reasoning animals - these are the very things that destroy them.* 1:10; *blemishes on your love feasts* 1:12; *shepherds who feed only themselves* 1:12; *clouds without rain, blown along by the wind; autumn tress, without fruit and twice uprooted - twice dead.* 1:12;

False teachings that infiltrated the early Church included:

Antinomianism - teaching that because we are not under law we are free to do whatever we like. This teaching resulted in lawlessness, and a promotion of immorality.

Gnosticism - a widespread philosophy that is based on 'God' being good and matter being evil. Salvation comes by way of knowledge (gnosis) revealed through 'Angels of light'. Gnosticism denies the fundamentals of the Christian faith: that God sent His Son as a man and that He was both God and man; that we receive salvation by faith and that Jesus is the only way someone can be saved.

Docetism - an extension of Gnosticism that taught that if Jesus was the Son of God He couldn't have been a man. He was like a phantom and only appeared to be a man.

wild waves of the sea, foaming up their shame. 1:13; wandering stars, for whom blackest darkness has been reserved forever. 1:13; ungodly sinners. 1:15; grumblers and fault-finders. 1:16; men who follow their own evil desires; boast about themselves and flatter others for their own advantage. 1:16; scoffers who follow their own ungodly desires. 1:18; men who divide you, who follow mere natural instincts and do not have the Spirit. 1:19. Strong words!!

Jude explains that the false teachers have been condemned and will be judged. Their judgement is likened to:

- the destruction of those who didn't believe when the children of Israel left Egypt.
- angels who abandoned their authority and who are now bound up in darkness till the day of Judgement
- Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns that were destroyed due to their immorality and perversion

Even the archangel Michael would not dare to slander others when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses! (This story is not described in the Old Testament. It is in a non-canonical book *The Assumption of Moses*).

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. 1:14,15 (This verse is a quote from another non-canonical book *The Book of Enoch*).

A call to persevere 1:17-23

Rather than following the false teachers Christians are to *build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit. Keep yourself in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life. 1:20,21* They are to *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. 1:22,23*

So, rather than being judgmental and harsh we are to be merciful, and help anyone who has been affected by false teaching to return to the truth. At the same time, though, we must be continually on guard to prevent false teaching from affecting us.

Doxology 1:24,25

Jude's letter concludes with one of the most loved and well used doxologies in the Bible.

To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy - to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen. 1:24,25

Discussion questions

Christian leaders like Jude actively protected the early Church from the effects of false teachers. What are the distinctive characteristics of false teachers and false teaching? How would we discern that someone is a false teacher today? What can we do to protect ourselves from false teaching, especially when information is so freely available, e.g. through the internet?

Gnostic philosophies still affect our society in countless ways, and underpin many 'politically correct' initiatives. Research Gnosticism and its influences on today's society. What can Christians do to be aware of Gnostic influences today, and protect themselves from them?

The early Church was very aware that Jesus was coming soon, and lived accordingly. Jude's message to persevere in 1:17-25 is in this context. These days we seem to have lost much of the urgency of Jesus coming again. How does this affect the modern Church? What does it mean to persevere in today's cultural environment? How can we be better prepared for Jesus' return?

What have you learned from your study of Jude's epistle? How will this be worked out in your Christian life?