

Book of Jude

Title:

Jude, which is rendered “Judah” in Hebrew and “Judas” in Greek, was named after its author (verse 1), one of the 4 half-brothers of Christ (Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3).

As the fourth shortest New Testament book (Philemon, 2 John and 3 John are shorter), Jude is the last of 8 general epistles.

Jude does not quote the Old Testament directly, but there are at least 9 obvious allusions to it.

Contextually, this “epistolary sermon” could be called “The Acts of the Apostates.”

Author – Date:

Although Jude (Judas), was a common name in Palestine (at least 8 are named in the New Testament), the author of Jude generally has been accepted as Jude, Christ’s half-brother.

He is to be differentiated from the Apostle Judas, the son of James (Luke 6:16; Acts 1:13).

Several lines of thought lead to this conclusion:

- (1) Jude’s appeal to being the “brother of James,” the leader of the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15), and another half-brother of Jesus (verse 1; Gal. 1:19);
- (2) Jude’s salutation being similar to James (James 1:1); and
- (3) Jude’s not identifying himself as an apostle (Verse 1), but rather distinguishing between himself and the apostles (verse 17).

Like most if not all of Jesus’ immediate family, Jude did not respond favorably to Jesus’ ministry during His earthly days (John 7:5).

Yet later he may have been among Jesus’ brothers who had preaching ministries (1Cor. 9:5).

As a close relative of Jesus and a brother of James, himself a renowned Jewish Christian leader in Jerusalem, Jude wrote with authority and the assurance that his earliest readers would give him a careful hearing.

The doctrinal and moral apostasy discussed by Jude (verses 4-18), closely parallels that of (2 Peter 2:1 - 3:4), and it is believed that Peter’s writing predated Jude for several reasons:

- (1) 2 Peter anticipates the coming of false teachers (2 Peter 2:1-2; 3:3), while Jude deals with their arrival (verses 4, 11, 12, 17, 18); and

(2) Jude quotes directly from (2 Peter 3:3), and acknowledges that it is from an apostle (verses 17-18).

Since no mention of Jerusalem's destruction in A.D. 70 had been made by Jude, though Jude most likely came after 2 Peter (A.D. 68-70), it is almost certainly written before the destruction of Jerusalem.

Although Jude did travel on missionary trips with other brothers and their wives (1 Cor. 9:5), it is most likely that he wrote from Jerusalem.

The exact audience of believers with whom Jude corresponded is unknown, but seems to be Jewish in light of Jude's illustrations.

He undoubtedly wrote to a region recently plagued by false teachers.

Although Jude had earlier rejected Jesus as Messiah (John 7:1-9), he along with other half-brothers of our Lord, was converted after Christ's resurrection (Acts 1:14).

Because of his relation to Jesus, his eye-witness knowledge of the resurrected Christ, and the content of this epistle, it was acknowledged as inspired and was included in the Muratorian Canon (170 A.D.).

The early questions about its canonicity also tend to support that it was written after 2 Peter.

If Peter had quoted Jude, there would have been no question about canonicity, since Peter would thereby have given Jude apostolic affirmation.

Clement of Rome (96 A.D.), plus Clement of Alexandria (200 A.D.), also alluded to the authenticity of Jude.

Its diminutive size and Jude's quotations from uninspired writings account for any misplaced questions about its canonicity.

Background – Setting:

Jude lived at a time when Christianity was under severe political attack from Rome and aggressive spiritual infiltration from gnostic-like apostates and libertines who sowed abundant seed for a gigantic harvest of doctrinal error.

It could be that this was the forerunner to full blown Gnosticism which the Apostle John would confront over 25 years later in his epistles.

Except for John, who lived at the close of the century, all the other apostles had been martyred, and Christianity was thought to be extremely vulnerable.

Thus, Jude called the church to fight, in the midst of intense spiritual warfare, for the truth.

Historical – Theological Themes:

Writing to warn believers of false teachers, Jude uses similar material as (in 2 Peter 2).

Both Jude and Peter were alarmed about the rapid rise of false doctrines and the subsequent prevailing attitude of apostasy, and both men addressed these issues in their epistles.

Evidently Jude's original intent for his letter was to discuss truths of the common salvation that both Jews and Gentiles received.

But he was led of the Spirit to exhort believers to defend the truth and contend for the faith.

He reminds his readers that God punishes violations of His law, by his citing Old Testament examples of Cain, Sodom and Gomorrah, the Egyptians, Balaam, and the rebellion of Korah (see Numbers 16).

Jude is the only New Testament book devoted exclusively to confronting “apostasy”, meaning defection from the true, biblical faith (verses 3, 17).

Apostates are described elsewhere (in 2 Thess. 2:10; Heb. 10:29; 2 Peter 2:1-22; 1 John 2:18-23).

He wrote to condemn the apostates and to urge believers to contend for the faith.

He called for discernment on the part of the church and a rigorous defense of biblical truth.

He followed the earlier examples of:

- (1) Christ (Matt. 7:15; 16:6-12; 24:11; Rev. chapters 2 and 3);
- (2) Paul (Acts 20:29-30; 1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Tim. 3:1-5; 4:3-4);
- (3) Peter (2 Peter 2:1-2; 3:3-4); and
- (4) John (1 John 4:1-6; 2 John 6-11).

Jude is replete with historical illustrations from the Old Testament which include:

- (1) The Exodus (verse 5);
- (2) Satan's rebellion (verse 6);
- (3) Sodom and Gomorrah (verse 7);
- (4) Moses' death (verse 9);
- (5) Cain (verse 11);
- (6) Balaam (verse 11);
- (7) Korah (verse 11);

- (8) Enoch Verses 14-15); and
- (9) Adam (verse 14).

Jude also vividly described the apostates in terms of their character and unconscionable activities (verses 4, 8, 10, 16, 18-19).

Additionally, he borrowed from nature to illustrate the futility of their teaching (verses 12-13).

While Jude never commented on the specific content of their false teaching, it was enough to demonstrate that their degenerate personal lives and fruitless ministries betrayed their attempts to teach error, as though it were truth.

This emphasis on character repeats the constant theme regarding the false teachers, and also their personal corruption.

While their teaching is clever, subtle, deceptive, enticing and delivered in myriads of forms, the common way to recognize them is to look behind their false spiritual fronts and see their wicked lives (2 Peter 2:10, 12, 18-19).

Several verses in this short epistle relate to future judgment, Christ's return, the Last Days, and the believer's destiny in the presence of His glory.

An interesting tidbit of prophecy is seen (in verses 14-16), where Jude quotes from ancient Jewish literature (200 B.C.).

This prophecy, that is not recorded in the Old Testament, is from the extra biblical book of 1 Enoch (1:9).

Jude uses it to emphatically illustrate the second coming of Christ.