



CONTEND EARNESTLY FOR THE FAITH THE EPISTLE OF JUDE

INTRODUCTION

2 Peter 2 was a serious warning against false teachers who were to come. The epistle of Jude, just one short chapter in length, is a serious warning about false teachers who were a present threat within the church. It seems those who were to come had indeed come!

Jude and 2 Peter 2 are very similar in thought and language. Both give the same warnings, the same examples and the same scathing denunciation of the false teachers. Some scholars believe that one of the writers used the other as a pattern for writing or that perhaps there was a third source from which both Peter and Jude may have borrowed. The important thing to remember is that both epistles were inspired by the Holy Spirit for the reason of warning believers down through the ages of the dangers of false teachers. Since God saw fit to include two letters of such warning in His Holy Scripture, it is appropriate for us to take this subject all the more seriously!

Author and Recipients of Jude

The author introduces himself as Jude, a bondservant of Jesus Christ and brother of James (Jude 1). Jude (Hebrew Judah or Greek Judas) was a common name in the first century and is found quite frequently in the New Testament. Two of Jesus' apostles were named Judas (Luke 6:16). However, Jude does not refer to himself as an apostle, and verse 17 probably rules out that possibility. The fact that he calls himself the brother of James is the best clue to his identity. The James to which he referred must have been well-known in the early church because Jude likely used his name as a credential in establishing his authority to write. This James may have been one of the apostles (Luke 6:14). More likely, he was a half-brother of Jesus (Matthew 13:55), and leader of the Jerusalem church (Acts 12:17 and 15:13). If he were the one to whom Jude referred, then Jude was also a half-brother of Jesus (Mark 6:3) and an unbeliever until after Christ's resurrection (Mark 3:21 and 31; John 7:5 and Acts 1:14).

The recipients of the letter are unknown. Some scholars believe it was written to Jewish Christians because Jude uses many references to the Old Testament and also sites Jewish apocryphal literature which would have been familiar to Jewish believers. However, this may simply have been because Jude himself was Jewish. The fact that the letter is not addressed to a particular church may mean that it was a circular letter which was passed around among many churches.

Purpose of the Epistle of Jude

Like Peter (in 2 Peter 2), Jude writes to warn about false teachers who were using their freedom in Christ to speak evil and indulge in evil lusts of the flesh. To combat the problem, Jude calls his readers to *contend earnestly for the faith* (Jude 3), remember what the apostles taught (Jude 17), continue to grow in faith (Jude 20), and rescue those with faltering faith.

The problems which Jude mentions in his epistle point to the beginnings of the heresy of gnosticism, a mixture of Greek and Roman philosophy and eastern religion. The gnostics emphasized a special enlightened knowledge above and beyond that revealed through Jesus Christ. This led to arrogance, divisiveness, and the exercise of license instead of liberty in their behavior. Their disobedience showed disdain for God's word.

Jude wrote this epistle because of his love and concern for the truth. He wrote to inspire that same love and concern for truth in his readers. Do you desire to know the truth and to feed your soul only upon truth and not on empty speculation and heresy? May Jude's epistle encourage your love of truth. May his appeal find root in your soul, encouraging you to grow in the knowledge of truth and to *contend earnestly for the faith!*

OUTLINE OF JUDE

- I. Greeting - Jude 1-2
- II. Warning - Jude 3-16
- III. Admonition - Jude 17-25

I. Greeting - Jude 1-2

- A. Writer's introduction - Jude 1a

Jude introduces himself as a bondservant of Jesus Christ, a humble portrayal, showing his deep devotion to his Lord. Jude was not an apostle, but possibly the brother of the apostle James, as noted in the introduction.

- B. Recipients - Jude 1b

Jude's description of the original recipients of his letter signifies that they are believers.

- 1. They are called - Jude 1

This refers to God's past choice and predestination of His saints. *For whom He foreknew, He also predestined*

to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified (Romans 8:29-30). See also 1 Corinthians 1:9; 1 Thessalonians 2:12 and Hebrews 9:15.

2. They are beloved by God - Jude 1

They are sanctified or set apart by Him.

3. They are preserved in Christ - Jude 1

They are kept by Him for the future perfection of their salvation. *Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time apart from sin, for salvation* (Hebrews 9:28).

C. Blessing - Jude 2

Jude adds love to the traditional Jewish greeting of grace and peace. This adds a distinctive Christian meaning. "God's mercy to undeserving sinners and the peace that results are grounded in His love manifested in Jesus Christ" (New Geneva Study Bible, footnotes).

II. Warning - Jude 3-16

A. Beware of false teachers - Jude 3-4

Jude had planned to write a letter concerning the doctrine of salvation, but as he took up his pen, the Spirit of God compelled him instead to write a letter of warning concerning a very real and present danger within the church — the danger of false teachers. Jude refers to them as ungodly men in verse 4.

1. Necessity of writing - Jude 3

It was because of the dangerous threat which the false teachers posed that Jude found it necessary to write this letter exhorting his readers to *contend earnestly for the faith* (Jude 3). To sit silently and idly by as ungodly men introduced their heresies into the church would open the way for a flood of evil.

Jude called believers to action. The word "contend" was used by the apostle Paul to refer to the Greek athletic games, and the fervent effort of the athletes to win the prize. The apostle John expresses the same idea in 2 John 8, *Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward*.

By "faith," Jude means the basis of Christian belief. It is the content of the message taught by the apostles and the standard of belief of all Christians.

2. Certain ungodly men - Jude 4

Jude depicts the false teachers.

a. They crept in unnoticed

The term literally means that they slipped in by a side door. They came from outside the particular church (or churches) to which Jude addressed his letter. They posed as believers and teachers but brought with them their own heretical doctrine.

b. They were long ago marked out for condemnation

The Jewish prophets, Jesus, and the apostles had all warned that ungodly deceivers would arise. In Mark 13:22-23, Jesus told his disciples, *false Christs and false prophets will rise and show signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. But take heed; see, I have told you beforehand*. See also Matthew 7:15-17; Acts 20:29-30; Romans 9:22 and 1 Peter 2:8.

c. They turn the grace of God into licentiousness

The false teachers taught that God's grace freed Christians from obedience to moral law and allowed them to live any way they wanted. This led to flagrant sin. In Romans 6:1-15 and Galatians 5:13, the apostle Paul addresses the same issue and teaches that a Christian is not one who has become free to sin, but free not to sin.

d. They deny the Lord Jesus

They rejected God's Son. Peter also mentions this in 2 Peter 2:1.

B. Remember past examples - Jude 5-7

Jude has already stated that these ungodly men are condemned. He now gives three past examples of judgment upon the ungodly.

1. Israelites - Jude 5; Numbers 14:27-34; Hebrews 3:7-19

The Jewish people were saved out of Egypt, but an entire generation was prohibited from going into the promised land. They died in the wilderness because they did not believe. The same thing will happen to the heretics in the church. The writer of Hebrews, in 4:1-2 says, *Since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it*.

This is also a warning to believers today. Going to church and being involved in religious activities is not evidence of true salvation. Each one needs to be discerning and examine his own heart and life.

2. Angels - Jude 6; 2 Peter 2:4

Jude's reference here is probably Genesis 6:1-4. The angels rebelled against God. They disregarded their proper responsibility and left the place which had been assigned to them from the beginning. Marvin R. Vincent in Word Studies in the New Testament, says, "they forsook their dignity." These angels are chained in darkness, awaiting judgment on the great day (the day of Christ's second coming).

3. Sodom and Gomorrah - Jude 7; 2 Peter 2:6

These two cities are used as an example throughout Scripture. See Deuteronomy 29:23; Isaiah 1:9; Jeremiah 49:18 and Romans 9:29. They are symbols of divine judgment by fire. They are God's clear warning to others who choose to disobey Him and live in unbelief and sexual immorality. They are doomed to the same fate — suffering forever in eternal fire.

C. Recognize apostasy - Jude 8-15

Jude describes the ungodly men (Jude 4), showing how to recognize those who have deserted the faith.

1. They reject authority - Jude 8-10

They are dreamers, unrealistic in their thinking. They are like the men of Sodom and Gomorrah, defiling the flesh, and involved in sexual immorality. Like the unbelieving Israelites, they reject the authority of the Lord. They also speak evil of dignitaries, a word which probably refers to angels. Some believe the reference is to evil angels, as in 2 Peter 2:10.

The example is given of the archangel Michael, the special guardian angel of Israel (Daniel 10:13, 21; 12:1). The incident is most likely based upon the reference to the burial of Moses in Deuteronomy 34:5-6. Jude's reference is to the Jewish apocryphal writing, The Assumption of Moses, which gives further details of that event.

The point is that Michael, as powerful as he is, showed restraint in dealing with the devil, deferring to the Lord to rebuke him. Conversely, the false teachers have no respect for authority. They have no understanding of spiritual things, but only irrational animal instincts. They speak evil of what they do not understand and are corrupt in all they say and do.

2. They are rebellious - Jude 11

Woe to them! "Woe" is a word which was used by the Lord Jesus, but nowhere else in the New Testament except in the Book of Revelation and here in Jude. (In 1 Corinthians 9:16, it is used in a different sense.) It is a denunciation of the false teachers.

a. Like Cain - Genesis 4:1-15; Hebrews 11:4; 1 John 3:12

In their unrighteousness, they have gone the way of Cain who showed contempt for God in his offering and in the murder of his brother.

b. Like Balaam - Numbers 22-24; 2 Peter 2:15-16

In their greed, they are like Balaam, operating for profit and enticing others to sin.

c. Like Korah - Numbers 16:1-35

In rebelling against Moses and Aaron, Korah rebelled against the authority of God. Being a part of the same rebellion, the false teachers also share in the same certain destruction!

3. They are deceptive - Jude 12-13a

a. Self-centered - 2 Peter 2:13

The false teachers joined outwardly with believers in their love feasts, which were meals (probably like our modern-day pot-luck) eaten in connection with the Lord's Supper. However, they had no concern for the spiritual welfare of the church but only for themselves. The feasts were opportunities for them to teach and advance their own ideas. The picture Jude paints is of shepherds who do not feed the flock but only themselves.

b. Spots - 2 Peter 2:13

The Greek word translated "spots" usually means "rocks" or "hidden reefs." These were a great danger to ships and often caused wreckage and ruin. The false teachers were a hidden danger to the smooth flowing operation of the church. They were hypocrites who never produced what they promised.

c. Clouds without water - 2 Peter 2:17

Like clouds which promise refreshing rain and then blow away with the wind, they are unstable and fail to satisfy.

d. Late autumn trees without fruit

Having no fruit, they were spiritually dead, and having no roots made them doubly dead. Their lives were barren and destined for destruction. Jesus said, *You will know them by their fruits.....every good tree bears good fruit.....a tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire* (Matthew 7:17-19).

e. Raging waves of the sea

Like wild, foaming waves, the false teachers produced nothing solid or useful. This was to their own shame.

f. Wandering stars

Jude probably had in mind shooting stars or comets. They were not useful to anyone. Imagine a ship trying to navigate by a wandering star! The false teachers gave no direction. They only served to lead people astray.

4. They are doomed - Jude 13b-16;
2 Peter 2:17

The false teachers are condemned to a place of *black darkness forever* (Jude 13b).

Jude refers to a prophecy about false teachers, most likely contained in the apocryphal Book of Enoch. It is a source which would have been familiar to Jude's original readers. It consisted of revelations purportedly given to Enoch and Noah to propound God's providence in all the natural, moral, and spiritual world.

The passage quoted describes the coming of the Lord with His angelic host (see Deuteronomy 33:2; Zechariah 14:5; Matthew 25:31) to execute judgment and convict the ungodly. The four repetitions of "ungodly" are important because they show that the rebellion of the false teachers (both their deeds and their words) is against God and against God's authority.

"These apostates were not unfruitful believers, who would not receive rewards in heaven at the judgment seat of Christ. On the contrary, they were imposters who would be judged according to their evil deeds" (Edward C. Pentecost, The Bible Knowledge Commentary).

III. Instruction - Jude 16-25

Jude contrasts the words and actions of the false teachers (Jude 16, 18, 19) with the words of the apostles.

A. Heed the words of the apostles - Jude 16-19

Believers are to remember the words of the apostles of

the Lord Jesus Christ. Jude's original readers had been taught directly by the apostles whose words are recorded for us in the Scriptures, particularly in the epistles. Jude referred specifically to their warnings against false teachers, as in Acts 20:29-30; 1 Timothy 4:1; 2 Timothy 3:1-5 4:3-4 and 2 Peter 2:1-3 and 3:3-4.

Jude describes the type of persons the apostles warned against as murmurers and complainers, just like the Israelites in the wilderness (Exodus 15:24; 16:2; 17:2; Jude 5). They walk according to their own lusts like the people of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:3-5; Jude 7), they mouth great swelling words like Korah (Numbers 16:3), and they flatter people to gain their own advantage (Jude 16). They mock the idea that those who are disobedient to the moral law will be punished (Jude 18).

They are sensual persons, worldly minded and unspiritual. They cause divisions in the church, perhaps making distinctions, as did the later gnostics between the "natural" or ordinary Christians and the more exalted "spiritual" Christians who had access to greater knowledge. Obviously, the false teachers would have counted themselves among the latter group, but Jude refutes that idea by saying that they do not have the Spirit. In other words, they are not true believers at all (Jude 19)!

B. Edify yourselves - Jude 20-21

Rather than be swayed by false teachers, believers are to direct their attention to their own spiritual growth.

1. Build - Jude 20

The foundation of faith has been laid by the apostles (and also the prophets before them. See Ephesians 2:20). Believers are to build upon that foundation because the church is like a building. The apostle Peter wrote, *you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house* (1 Peter 2:5). Jesus Christ is the *chief cornerstone* (1 Peter 2:6-7 and Ephesians 2:20). We are *His own house* (Hebrews 3:6), being joined together and growing into a holy temple, *a habitation of God* (Ephesians 2:21-22). How are you building yourself up in your most holy faith?

2. Pray - Jude 20

Prayer is a necessary part of vital Christian living. *Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints* (Ephesians 6:18). Every prayer should be controlled by the Holy Spirit in order to be in submission to God's will. *Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the*

Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.....He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God (Romans 8:26-27). Do you pray daily, making supplication for all the saints in humble submission to the Holy Spirit?

3. Keep yourselves in the love of God -
Jude 21

Jesus spoke of how we are to accomplish this. *As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love (John 15:9-10). The secret is in abiding. See also 1 John 4:12-13 and 20-21. Do you show your love for God by obeying His commandments?*

4. Look for the blessed hope - Jude 21

The mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life refers to the second coming of Christ. The writer of Hebrews in 9:28 wrote: to those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation (NASB). Peter referred to that time as salvation ready to be revealed in the last time (1 Peter 1:5) Receiving the end of your faith — the salvation of your souls (1 Peter 1:9), and the revelation of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:5,9 and 13). Later he added that we are to be looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God (2 Peter 3:12). The apostle Paul also wrote that we are to be looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ (Titus 2:13). Our eyes are to be looking upward for Christ rather than downward at the false teachers.

C. Show mercy - Jude 22-23

Christians are to have compassion on those who are being led astray. We are to rescue the sinner but despise the sin so that we may not be contaminated by it. *Hating even the garment defiled by the flesh,* means to keep yourself away from what is obviously evil. This may refer to both the false teachers and their contaminating influence. Paul warned, *not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner — not even to eat with such a person (1 Corinthians 5:11). John wrote, If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine (the doctrine of Christ), do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds (2 John 9-11).*

D. Find victory in Christ - Jude 24-25

Only God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, is willing and able to keep us from stumbling and to sanctify us to stand blameless and joyful before Him in the last day. The presence of His glory is now our hope, but it will be our experience. Our faith will be made complete and perfect and that is reason for exceeding joy.

It is also reason to ascribe to Him all *glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever.* If we remember this and live our lives in reliance upon that glory, majesty, dominion, and power, we will be safe.

Application

Is your hope set upon the blessed appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ? What erroneous teachings may be distracting you from full love and devotion to Him? What are you relying upon other than Him who is able (Jude 24) to support you and bring you safely to full salvation? Will you now give all glory to Him and put your trust in Him alone, building yourself up in His word and in knowledge of Him that you might obey Him more and more?