

The General Epistle of Jude

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Faith in the New Testament it can refer to our **trust** in Christ, or it can be used as a noun and refer to that doctrine, or truth given to us by the inspiration of God. Paul warned ...

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1 Timothy 4:1 - "... in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils."

Apostasy has been a recurring theme of Paul's epistles and the general epistles that we have studied in this class. It was already occurring at the time the epistles were written. We have now come to the book of Jude.

John Phillips wrote this foreword:

"We come to Jude, whose original intention was to write a treatise on the subject of salvation. The Holy Spirit changed his mind, however, and he wrote, instead, a remarkable memorandum on apostasy. Suddenly, the full scope and horror of the apostasies that seemed to be surfacing everywhere in late apostolic times dawned upon him. Hence, his vivid little volume!

The book of Jude is a treasure chest of fact and illustration. It is a thunderbolt hurled from on high. Its echoes reverberate down the centuries. They sound the alarm for us in this Laodicean age of the church, an age marked by lukewarmness in the church pew, by rank apostasy in the seminary, and by liberalism in the pulpit itself.

Jude is the man for our apostate age. His trumpet sounds the imminent coming of Christ. His voice is the last to speak to us in our Bible before the Apocalypse takes place. Let us listen, then, to Jude, and we will never again judge a book by its size."

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I. WRITER: Jude, the brother of James

Jude, meaning praise of Jehovah, was a common name among Jews at the time of Christ. There were six men in the N.T. with this name and two of them were apostles. According to Jude 1, the writer is the brother of James. Only two of the six are known to have a brother named James.

1. Judas Lebbaeus Thaddaeus (Mt. 10:3; Mk 3:18). His brother is James, the son of Alphaeus also known as "James the Less". This Judas was an apostle (Lk 6:16; Acts 1:13).

2. Judas or Juda (Matt. 13:55 and Mark 6:3). Both he and his brother, James, are the half-brother of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We believe it was this Judas that wrote the book of Jude for two reasons. First, the writer does not refer to himself as an apostle which eliminates Judas Lebbaeus Thaddaeus. Second, he refers to himself as the “brother of James” who was the well-known senior pastor of the church at Jerusalem and writer of the book of James.

II. AUDIENCE: To all Christians, both Jews and Gentiles (Jude 1, 3)

III. Date: 69 A.D.

This epistle was most likely written after 2 Peter (66 – 67 AD) and before the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. So, that leaves a narrow range of 68 – 70 AD. We will adopt the date of 69 AD.

IV. NOTES:

The apostasy that Jude, Peter, and John combated was an early form of Gnosticism which has evolved over the last 2,000 years. People don’t call themselves Gnostics today, but its belief system is found in different religions, cults and in the New Age Movement.

Gnosticism was not a form of Christianity. It was Asian paganism influencing Christianity. In any form, Gnosticism denies the doctrine of the incarnation of Jesus Christ, His diety, and they believe they can earn their way to heaven without the atoning blood of the Son of God. They refuse to see their utter sinfulness and refuse to surrender to God.

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Outline of Jude

- I. The Plan (vv. 1–4)
- II. The Plot (vv. 5–19)
 - A. Confronting the apostasy of the church (vv. 5–16)
 - B. Confronting the apathy of the church (vv. 17–19)
- III. The Plea (vv. 20–25)
 - A. An exhortation (vv. 20–23)
 - B. An exclamation (vv. 24–25)

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I. The Plan (vv. 1-4)

v. 1 - ¹Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, *and* called:

“Jude” is the English form of the name Judas. Jude did not emphasize his physical relationship to Jesus Christ, being his half-brother, but rather emphasized his spiritual relationship to Christ, that of a “bond slave” (“servant”). His audience is to all Christians, both Jews and Gentiles. He starts with a 3-fold description of the saved person.

- 1) Sanctified (by God the Father): meaning to be set apart by God for His use.
- 2) Preserved (in Jesus Christ) meaning to guard, to keep in safety. God keeps us saved.
- 3) Called: meaning appointed, invited. It is essentially synonymous with one who is saved.

v. 2 - ²Mercy unto you, and peace, and love, be multiplied.

These three things are multiplied to all saints:

- 1) Mercy: meaning compassion.
- 2) Peace: the quietness and rest that comes to the heart that has trusted in Christ.
- 3) Love (*agape*): This is the driving force behind God's grace and mercy. Because God is love, in mercy, He gave what the world needed to be reconciled to Him, which in turn brings peace.

v. 3 - ³Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort *you* that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

Jude intended to write of salvation, but it became needful instead to exhort them to "earnestly contend for the faith." Contending for "the faith" means to teach those who are teachable without being contentious with the unteachable. "The faith once delivered" seems to be that great body of doctrine that is the whole of Bible truth.

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It is the "all things" that Christ mentioned in Matt. 28:20 - "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you:".

It is the doctrine of the apostles. Acts 2:42 - "And they continued stedfastly in the apostle's doctrine and fellowship."

It is that which we are to continue in. Acts 14:22 - "Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God."

It is what the churches were established in. Acts 16:5 - "And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in numbers daily".

It is what Paul preached. Galatians 1:23 - "That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which he once destroyed."

It is what we are to be unified in. Eph. 4:13 - "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, ..."

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v. 4 - ⁴For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

“Crept in unawares” is their method. It means “to enter alongside”. They do not come in openly proclaiming their false doctrine right away. They blend in for a while and even infiltrate the leadership in the church. Paul spoke of this in

Acts 20:29,30 - For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.

The apostates that Paul warned of would come from within the ranks of the pastors that Paul was speaking to. Jude describes these apostates three ways in verse 4.

- 1) Ungodly men: meaning “without fear and reverence of God”. They leave God out of their lives.
- 2) Turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness: meaning immorality.
- 3) Denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ: a characteristic of Gnosticism.

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II. The Plot (vv. 5–19)

A. Confronting the apostasy of the church (vv. 5–16)

Jude now gives three historical examples past apostasy.

v. 5 - ⁵I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not.

After delivering Israel out of Egypt, God destroyed or allowed to die all the adult generation that refused to believe Him. God delivered them out of Egypt, but the people wanted to turn back to the bondage in Egypt which is a picture of the life of sin.

v. 6 - ⁶And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.

Angels in Rebellion Kept in Chains. At some time in the past, these angels did not keep “their first estate” and are now reserved in everlasting chains in darkness unto the day when they will be thrown into the lake of fire with the beast and false prophet.

Why were these others placed in chains? What was their “first estate?” Some believe it refers to the “sons of God” in Genesis 6:1-6 being angels (demons) that had actual sexual relations with human women that resulted in “mighty men which *were* of old, men of renown.”

v. 7 - ⁷Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.

Jude's third example of group apostasy in the past. They are an example of God's judgment on the sin of extreme fornication: sodomy. God calls sodomy an abomination, and many times in history He has destroyed civilizations that have "given themselves over to it". God will judge any civilization that goes too far in this direction.

v. 8 - ⁸Likewise also these *filthy* dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities.

This is the second set of three descriptions of the apostates.

- 1) Filthy dreamers defile the flesh: Just like the inhabitants of Sodom. Romans 1 elaborates on how they get to this level. They reject God and God gives them up.
- 2) Despise dominion: They have an overwhelming hatred for all authority.
- 3) Speak evil of dignities: Always putting down authority, especially God-given authority.

v. 9 - ⁹Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee.

Michael the archangel is given as an example of appropriateness, an example against the sin of "railing" meaning evil speaking. Michael did not rail at the devil, leaving God to be the One who does the rebuking. Yet, many people today have not learned to have this amount of respect to the man of God placed over us, or to the children of God placed around us.

Michael's dispute with Satan about Moses' body is not found in the OT. Josephus, Jewish historian around the time of Christ says God hid Moses' body lest it be made an idol. Possibly Satan wanted it to tempt Israel into idolatry.

v. 10 - ¹⁰But these speak evil of those things which they know not: but what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves.

We need to be very careful of what we put down, criticize, and rail against.

v. 11 - ¹¹Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core.

This is the third set of descriptions of the apostates.

- 1) Gone in the way of Cain. Cain rejected God's plan of salvation by offering the works of his hands instead of the blood sacrifice that God required. These apostates reject the blood atonement. Cain did not come to God by faith.

2) Ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward. He taught the Moabites and Midianites to cause the people of God to commit fornication and idolatry so that God would destroy His people in judgment. What was Balaam's motive? Covetousness (2 Peter 2:15 "Balaam,..., who loved the wages of unrighteousness"). He was a hired preacher, in it for the money.

3) Perished in the gainsaying of Core. Korah rebelled against God's ordained authority, Moses, the man of God.

vv. 12-13 - ¹²These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds *they are* without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; ¹³Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.

They are without fruit. Christ taught that we shall know false teachers by their fruit (Matthew 7:15-20). They lack a fear of God. Their doctrine changes ("carried about of winds"). They are "twice dead" meaning they know the truth, but they have rejected it and turned away from it. Jude is clear that their fate is sealed," to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever."

vv. 14-15 - ¹⁴And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, ¹⁵To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard *speeches* which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.

Enoch's prophesy is mentioned. It is not found in the OT. But Jude is inspired of the Holy Ghost to include it. So, realize here what Enoch was preaching right in the middle of the time before the Flood. He pleased God and walked with God, but he was preaching judgment and a great prophecy of the resurrection of all the saved, and the coming of the Messiah. My point is that those before the Flood had the Word of God, they were accountable.

v. 16 - ¹⁶These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling *words*, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage.

This is the fourth set of three descriptions of apostates.

- 1) Murmurers – to self?
- 2) Complainers – to others?
- 3) Walking after their own lusts.

Their mouth speaketh great swelling words. They are eloquent, great orators that can easily impress the undiscerning.

B. Confronting the apathy of the church (vv. 17–19)

vv. 17-18 - ¹⁷But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; ¹⁸How that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts.

Mockers mean to scoff or deride the things of God. Here Jude especially seems to be referring to 2 Peter.

2 Peter 3:3 - Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts

v. 19 - ¹⁹These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit.

This is the fifth set of three descriptions of the apostates.

- 1) Who separate themselves. They don't want to be around those who live for Christ.
- 2) Sensual. They are "lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God." 2 Timothy 3:4
- 3) Having not the Spirit. This tells us clearly that they're **lost!**

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III. The Plea (vv. 20–25)

A. An exhortation (vv. 20–23)

vv. 20-23 - ²⁰But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, ²¹Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. ²²And of some have compassion, making a difference: ²³And others save with fear, pulling *them* out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.

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What must we do in the days of apostasy?

1. Build up ourselves in the faith - study God's Word, know God's word, and live God's Word.
2. Pray in the Holy Ghost. I Thess. 5:17 - "Pray without ceasing." Ephesians 6:18
3. Keep ourselves in the love of God. Abide in Him. John 15:4-10
4. Look For the coming of Christ. Be mindful of His coming.
5. Have Compassion on others.
6. Save Others. Reach out to the lost with the gospel.
7. Hate Evil. Hate sin, not the sinner.

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B. An exclamation (vv. 24–25)

vv. 24-25 - ²⁴Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present *you* faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, ²⁵To the only wise God our Saviour, *be* glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and for ever. Amen.

It is God who keeps us from falling. It is God who has predestined those who get saved to be conformed to the image of Christ.

Romans 8:29 - For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

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And so ends the book of Jude and our class on the General Epistles.