

# The Letter of Jude

Adult Bible Study  
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## I. Author -

- A. Describes himself as “Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James.” It is an interesting description for two reasons:
  - 1. It shows the prominence of James who was Bishop of Jerusalem. Along with Peter and John James was considered one of the pillars of the Church (Gal 2:9). James was martyred in 62.
  - 2. First, that James and Jude are brothers is attested to elsewhere (Lk 6:16; Acts 1:13). But elsewhere both James and Jude are listed as “brothers” of the Lord (Gal 1:19; Matt 13:55). That Jude mentions James as his brother, as a type of credential, but not Jesus, is significant. It helps to show us that the term brother could be ambiguous. It could also mean cousin or other close relative. Some might argue that Jude is merely engaging in humility here, instead calling himself a “servant of Jesus Christ” but it remains an interesting omission. It also shows that the early Church, when insisting that Mary had no other children and remained a virgin was not “ignorant” of Scripture but understood the term “brother” with greater flexibility than some today.
- B. Jude is also called Judas but he is not the same Judas who betrayed the Lord. His surname is Thaddaeus
- C. Some, as usual, doubt it was Jude, Apostle, who actually wrote the letter. They note some of the vocabulary and phraseology as more usual in later Greek. But many of the early Fathers attest to his authorship.

## II. Addressees -

- A. To whom the letter was originally sent is not exactly known. The salutation “to those who are called, beloved in the Lord” is used of Christians in general.
- B. Yet they seem to be Jewish converts to Christianity since Jude quotes from extra biblical works known primarily to Jews such as *The Assumption of Moses* (v. 9) and the *Book of Enoch* (vv. 14-15).
- C. The mention of James, Bishop of Jerusalem may located the recipients as in and around that city.

## III. Date

- A. There is no mention to the destruction of Jerusalem so the letter is probably written prior to 70 AD
- B. There seems to be some consensus too that it was written after the death of James which took place in 62 AD.

#### IV. Background and Purpose

- A. The stated purpose of this brief letter is mentioned in v. 3 wherein he exhorts the faithful to protect the faith delivered to them once and for all. Evidently, false teachers dominated by their passions have had bad influence.
- B. The problem seems more related to bad morals than to erroneous theology per se. Yet it should be noted that bad theology and bad morals are usually related and cross pollinate each other.
- C. This bad moral vision seems to be in its early stages and the proponents of it still take part in community life. Jude wants both to expose them and win them back if possible but surely protect others from their errors.

- I. Greeting - *Jude 1:1 Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James, To those who are called, beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ: 2 May mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you.*
- A. *Those who are called* - a phrase rooted in the Greek word for church (*ekklesia* = those called out). Note too the gratuity - we are called, we are the recipients of God's mercy and grace. It is his gift to call us. Even our response is assisted by his grace. Further this call sets the stage for our differentiation from the world. Hence Jude will call them to reject worldly ways as the letter unfolds.
1. John 15:16 *You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide; so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. This I command you, to love one another. "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.*
- B. *Kept for (through) Jesus Christ* - the Greek word translated here as kept is better translated "preserved" or kept safe. This is our call, to live under the protection of God's grace and teaching. The world and its ways is that from which we must be protected and seek this protection. God is not our enemy trying to take away our fun, he is our protector and savior. There is much evil and error, God through Jesus his Son and his mystical body the Church seeks to protect us from this evil and error.
- C. Hence, may God's love, mercy and peace continue to grow in us rather than the greed, selfishness, heartlessness and mediocrity of the world and its false teachers.
- II. Stated Purpose - *3 Beloved, being very eager to write to you of our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. 4 For admission has been secretly gained by some who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly persons who pervert the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.*
- A. Salvation is not just a past event as in "I was saved" but rather an on-going state in which we are called to live. It is like entering a fortified and protected city. Within its walls there is protection, salvation, safety. We are called to continue living in that protection, salvation and safety that the Lord offers every day.
- B. But we have to contend. Life is a battle, there are on-going temptations to resist and fight. With the Lord's grace we are called to fight this battle and win through to the end. Too often, rather than fight we indulge in the world!
- C. We have to be sober. There are enemies, some of them closer than we imagine. Even in our families and parishes. We must realize they are headed for destruction (unless they change) and if we follow them there we are head for the same destruction.

- D. These enemies pervert, ignore and reverse God's teachings.
1. Jesus died to make us free they say. But freedom is not freedom to sin it is freedom from sin.
  2. Gal 5:13 *For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love be servants of one another.*
  3. John 8:34 *Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, every one who commits sin is a slave to sin.*
  4. Rom 5: *Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more..What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?*

III. None of this "Once Saved, Always Saved!" - **5 Now I desire to remind you, though you were once for all fully informed, that he who saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe. 6 And the angels that did not keep their own position but left their proper dwelling have been kept by him in eternal chains in the nether gloom until the judgment of the great day; 7 just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise acted immorally and indulged in unnatural lust, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.**

- A. It is not enough to "get saved" we must remain in that salvation. For example, it is not enough to enter into a fortified and protected city. I must remain in it. Only inside the walls do I experience protection and salvation.
- B. Paul develops the same logic -
1. 1 Cor 10:1 *I want you to know, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same supernatural food and all drank the same supernatural drink. For they drank from the supernatural Rock which followed them, and the Rock was Christ. Nevertheless with most of them God was not pleased; for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things are warnings for us, not to desire evil as they did. Do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to dance." We must not indulge in immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. We must not put the Lord to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents; nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer. Now these things happened to them as a warning, but they were written down for our instruction, upon whom the end of the ages has come. Therefore let any one who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.*
- C. We also saw it in Hebrews - 3:7 *Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, "Today, when you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the wilderness, where your fathers put me to the test and saw my works for forty years. Therefore I was provoked with that generation, and said, 'They always go astray in their hearts; they have not known my ways.' As I swore in my*

wrath, *'They shall never enter my rest.'*" Take care, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we share in Christ, if only we hold our first confidence firm to the end....

IV. The Sins of these false teachers - **8 Yet in like manner these men in their dreamings defile the flesh, reject authority, and revile the glorious ones. 9 But when the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, disputed about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a reviling judgment upon him, but said, "The Lord rebuke you." 10 Yet these men speak abusively against whatever they do not understand; and what things they do understand by instinct, like unreasoning animals--these are the very things that destroy them. 11 Woe to them! For they walk in the way of Cain, and abandon themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam's error, and perish in Korah's rebellion.**

A. These false teachers are not led by truth but by dreams - Many today likewise have dreamy, non-biblical notions of God. Oh God doesn't mind, they say though his word clearly indicates he does care. Etc.

1. Dt. 13:1 *"If a prophet arises among you, or a dreamer of dreams, and gives you a sign or a wonder; 2 and the sign or wonder which he tells you comes to pass, and if he says, 'Let us go after other gods,' which you have not known, 'and let us serve them,' 3 you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or to that dreamer of dreams; for the LORD your God is testing you, to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. 4 You shall walk after the LORD your God and fear him, and keep his commandments and obey his voice, and you shall serve him and cleave to him. 5 But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has taught rebellion against the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you out of the house of bondage, to make you leave the way in which the LORD your God commanded*

B. Three sins are described in a general way:

1. **Defile the flesh** - probably sexual sins. Recall, our author has already referenced Sodom and Gomorrah in verses 4 & 7. More generically any sin which debases the body, drunkenness, sexual corruption, gluttony, suicide, euthanasia etc.

a. 1 Cor 6:18 *Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.*

2. **Reject authority** - the Greek literally says, "Reject Lordship" In this sense they reject Jesus authority by rejecting his teaching. They also reject

the authority of the Church whom Jesus commissioned to teach in his name

a. Lk 10:16 *"He who hears you hears me, and he who rejects you rejects me, and he who rejects me rejects him who sent me."*

3. **Revile the glorious ones.** - that is, angels. It is unclear whether the text means they revile angels or the existence of angels, and by extension the existence of demons. What follows later in verse nine is an unusual quote from a work entitled *The Assumption of Moses*. Even the Archangel Michael did not revile a fellow angel (though a demon). The uses of the illustration serves only to illustrate the arrogance of the false teachers. They reject spiritual teachings that require some spiritual maturity to understand and seem only in touch with brutish and bodily instinct. They only respond to their passions, the things of the spirit are beyond their understanding or appreciation.

- V. A colorful concern of their effect upon the community - **12 *These are blemishes on your love feasts, as they boldly carouse together, looking after themselves; waterless clouds, carried along by winds; fruitless trees in late autumn, twice dead, uprooted; 13 wild waves of the sea, casting up the foam of their own shame; wandering stars....16 These are grumblers, malcontents, following their own passions, loud-mouthed boasters, flattering people to gain advantage....19 It is these who set up divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit.***

- A. All the images seem to make this fundamental point - they are attractive and promising on the outside but empty and fruitless within
- B. Further they have a bad effect on the community, they are blemishes, grumblers, malcontents, flatterers. Etc.

- VI. ***for whom the nether gloom of darkness has been reserved for ever. 14 It was of these also that Enoch in the seventh generation from Adam prophesied, saying, "Behold, the Lord came with his holy myriads, 15 to execute judgment on all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their deeds of ungodliness which they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against him."***

- A. This is to be their lot. Be sober about this.

- VII. We had been warned - **17 *But you must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; 18 they said to you, "In the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions."***

- A. These things were warned of by the Prophets and the Lord -

1. 2 Peter 3:2 *that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles. First of all you must understand this, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own passions*
2. Acts 20:28 [Paul said to the elders] *Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God which he obtained with the blood of his own Son. I know*

*that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears.*

3. *2 Tim 4:3 For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own likings, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander into myths. As for you, always be steady,*
4. *Mat 7:15 "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves.*
5. *Mat 24:11, 24 And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray....24 For false Christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. Lo, I have told you beforehand.*

**VIII. 20 But you, beloved, build yourselves up on your most holy faith; pray in the Holy Spirit; 21 keep yourselves in the love of God; wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. 22 And convince some, who doubt; 23 save some, by snatching them out of the fire; on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.**

- A. Be strong yourself through faith, prayer, patience and love.
- B. Seek lost souls, strive to bring them back but do not admire them.

**IX. Final Doxology - 24 Now to him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you without blemish before the presence of his glory with rejoicing, 25 to the only God, our Savior through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and for ever. Amen.**

- A. God can keep us from error and lead us on the path of perfection
- B. Thus rejoice in him, praise him!