

Study of Jude

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Introductory to Jude

The writer was the half brother of Christ, called “Judas” in Mark 6:3. The resurrected Christ was seen by James, another half brother (1 Cor. 15:7), so undoubtedly both James and Judas became believers about the same time. Christ’s brethren are mentioned in Acts 1:13–14 as sharing in the prayer meeting before Pentecost. Note that Jude does not boast of his human relationship to Christ. He prefers to call himself a “bond-slave of Jesus Christ” and a brother of James. Though in his letter Jude speaks of judgment, he is careful to point out that the true believer is kept in Christ (vv. 1, 24). We do not keep ourselves saved, but we should keep ourselves in the love of God by obeying His Word (v. 21).

I. The Aim of the Letter (vv. 3–4)

Jude started to write a message on “salvation,” but was led by the Spirit to abandon his theme and warn the believers of the false teachers now in the church. You will note that many verses in Jude parallel 2 Peter 2. Jude was written later, for Peter prophesied that these false teachers would come (2 Peter 2:1; 3:3), and Jude says that they are now here and at work. He reminds us that Peter has already announced their condemnation. He identifies these false teachers as the same people Peter described: they creep in secretly, bring false doctrine, and live in sin. “Turning the grace of God into lasciviousness” (v. 4) means they told people that grace permitted them to live as they pleased. See Rom. 6:1ff.

How are Christians to react to this danger? “Contend earnestly for the faith!” (v. 3) is Jude’s command. We are to defend God’s truth and the body of doctrine the NT calls “the faith.” We are to be soldiers who hold the fort at any cost.

II. The Argument (vv. 5–16)

Jude’s theme in this section is the condemnation of these false teachers and those who follow them. He cites seven OT examples to prove his point:

A. *Israel* (v. 5).

God delivered Israel from Egypt and its plagues, but afterward had to destroy unbelievers. Jude makes it clear that these men are not believers; v. 19 states that they do not have the Spirit. Merely being “in the church” is no evidence of salvation. Many Jews were “in the nation” yet destroyed because of their sin.

B. Fallen angels (v. 6).

See 2 Peter 2:4. Jude seems to be referring to the angels who consorted with the daughters of men in Gen. 6. This was Satan's scheme to corrupt the human race and thus prevent the birth of the promised Seed (Gen. 3:15). These angels who defied God were judged and imprisoned in Tartarus, a special part of hell.

C. Sodom and Gomorrah (v. 7).

The phrase "in like manner" suggests that the sins of these cities parallel the fornication of the angels of v. 6. Second Peter 2:6–8 discusses these wicked cities. Jude says that the judgment of these cities is an illustration of hell.

D. Michael and Moses (vv. 8–10).

Michael the archangel is the special angel for Israel (Dan. 12:1). The reference here seems to be to the burial of Moses (Deut. 34:6). God will bring Moses back as one of the witnesses to the Jews during the Tribulation period (Rev. 11), but Satan tried to secure the body. Jude's point is that the archangel did not rebuke Satan, for this takes more authority than Michael really had. The angel allowed God to do the rebuking. These false teachers, in their pride, despise authority and speak evil of holy things in their sin and ignorance.

E. Cain (v. 11).

This example takes us back to Gen. 4, where Cain appears at the altar without a blood sacrifice. The way of Cain is the way of man-made religion, rejecting the revelation of God and the blood of the Savior. See 1 John 3:11–12; Heb. 11:4.

F. Balaam (v. 11).

See 2 Peter 2:15–16. The error of Balaam involved leading others into sin for personal gain. Balaam knew the truth but deliberately led Israel into sin that he might make money. See Num. 22–25, especially 25:1–9.

G. Korah (v. 11).

Read Num. 16. Korah and his followers rejected the divine authority given to Moses and tried to assume power for themselves. False teachers promote themselves and override the authority of God's servants. They will be judged, as were Korah and his followers.

In vv. 12–13, Jude describes these false teachers in vivid terms; read these verses in a modern translation for an accurate description. Of what value are clouds without water, trees without fruit, and stars that wander and so give no help to the traveler? He closes his argument by quoting Enoch who, at the beginning of history, prophesied of their doom. Note the repetition of the word "ungodly" in these verses.

III. The Admonition (vv. 17–25)

How are Christians to act in the light of this situation? First, they are to remember the Word (see 2 Peter 3). Christ promised that mockers would come, and now they had appeared. The growth of apostasy is more evidence of Satan's determination to block the truth of the Word of God. Further, Christians are to grow spiritually, building themselves up in the Lord. They do this by praying in the Spirit (as the Spirit leads, see Rom. 8:26–27), obeying the Word and thus abiding in God's love, and watching for

Christ's return. What a combination for a victorious Christian life: praying, learning and living the Bible, and expecting Christ's return.

How are Christians to act toward those who are following these false teachers? "Make a difference" (v. 22) is his admonition. In other words, treat each situation individually. Some persons need to be shown pity; others can be saved and snatched out of the fire. Some may be too far gone to help. Jude warns us that, as we seek to help others, we must take care not to be defiled by them ourselves. The OT priest was not to get his garments defiled, and NT Christians (who are also priests) must keep themselves unspotted from the world (James 1:27).

Jude closes with a wonderful benediction, emphasizing the power of Christ to keep His own. Christians do not keep themselves saved; Christ keeps them to the very end. Verse 1 says that we are "kept for Jesus Christ," indicating that the Father has a personal interest in our preservation. Verse 24 states that we are "kept by Jesus Christ." What more security could the Christian desire?

Hebrews 12:2 says that Christ endured the cross "because of the joy that was set before Him." Jude tells us what that joy was: the privilege of presenting His church before the Father in glory. The Bridegroom will one day present His bride faultless in glory. What a day that will be!

As you read this epistle, you cannot help but realize that Christians must defend the faith and oppose false teachers. Christ is guarding us, but He wants us to guard the deposit He has left in our hands (2 Tim. 1:13–14; 1 Tim. 6:20). There is awful doom awaiting those who reject Christ and teach Satan's lies. Some we might be able to save; others we can only pity. May God help us to be faithful until He comes!