

**Text:** Jude 1-4

**Title:** An Urgent Letter

**Truth:** Contend for the faith because a dangerous enemy is even now at work!

**Date/Location:** Sunday December 28, 2014 at FBC

## Introduction

Jude's letter has been called "The Acts of the Apostates." Jude probably wrote late in the 60s AD, before the destruction of the Jerusalem temple, but after ungodly people became a more serious danger to the church by infiltrating it.

### I. Who is Jude? v. 1a

#### A. Self-Identification

1. Bondservant of Jesus Christ. He regarded himself as a slave of the Lord. In other words, he was fully under the authority or *Lordship* of Jesus. He was unlike the false teachers who "reject authority" in verse 8. That phrase can be translated literally as "they reject lordship." Every true believer is under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, and a man of Jude's stature is no exception. In Biblical thought also, the idea of a servant is a position of honor, particularly when the person served has great honor. The term can have both the humble and the honored connotation, although I think the humble meaning receives a bit more emphasis here.
2. Note that almost all the NT writers self-identified *first* in terms of their connection with Jesus. Even in the exceptions (1 & 2 Thessalonians, Hebrews, and John's short epistles), the same fact is evident. The Biblical authors saw themselves as either slaves or apostles of Christ or both. If we believe following apostolic example is worthwhile (and I believe it is), then we should identify ourselves the same way. Our self-identity, worth, and outlook should center around who we are as attached to Christ. We should not think first of our family name, our job, degrees, our fame, or even our supposed lack of accomplishments if we are the depressed type of personality. We are first "Matt, **Christian, servant of the Lord Jesus Christ...**" and then all the rest.
3. Jude did not claim to be an apostle, and distanced himself from the apostles in verse 17. Most if not all of the other apostles, except John and perhaps Matthew, had died by this point in history. It was legitimate therefore to basically speak of the apostles in the past tense, as Jude did in v. 17.
4. Jude was a minister of Christ. 1 Cor. 9:5 probably includes him, indicating he traveled at least some to preach the gospel, teach, and testify.

#### B. Family

1. Jude was not the apostle Judas, son of James (Luke 6:16, Acts 1:13).
2. It is widely accepted that Jude was the half-brother of Jesus. Matthew 13:55 and Mark 6:3 say that Jesus had a brother "Judas." What a shadow to grow

up in! But later on, it would be a powerful testimony if you could say, “My brother was, in fact, utterly perfect. I lived with him, and I know!” We all know many warts of our close family members. Not so with Jude in terms of his Brother Jesus!

3. Jude would therefore be the brother of James, as he says in Jude 1. This James was the pastor of the Jerusalem church. Jude gives similar greeting as James 1:1, which shows he has a level of parity with his brother—both are servants of Christ! James was probably the oldest brother after Jesus, since he is listed first in the “brother lists.” Jude was one of the younger brothers.
4. Neither Jude nor James specifically say that they are physical brothers of Jesus, because *that* is not the important relationship; nor is it a relationship that would convey any authority anyway because spiritual life and family is of such a different sort than physical life and family.
5. Jude may also mention James to help identify himself and ensure that people knew his writing was authentic.

### C. Spiritual Condition

1. Like us all, Jude started out life as an unbeliever, and continued that way into early adulthood. This is shown in John 7:1-9, especially v. 5.
2. But somewhere along the way, from the human standpoint, his brother Jesus’ life and words had their effect. Acts 1:14 indicates all his brothers were saved. From the divine standpoint, we should take care to note that God was pleased to draw Jude to salvation, through the testimony of his older Brother, and through the work of the Holy Spirit (John 6:44, 2 Thess. 2:13).

## II. Relationship of Jude’s Letter to 2 Peter

Any reader will notice how similar Jude is to 2 Peter, with the many parallels from 2 Peter 2:1-3:3. Peter had been martyred in the mid 60s AD. And I believe Jude wrote later than Peter, for the following reasons:

- A. The text in 2 Peter that describes the false teachers indicates that false teachers were coming in 2:1, 2; 3:3 (they *will* come). However, in Jude 4, 11, 12, 17-19, the false teachers had already snuck in and were wreaking havoc in the churches.
- B. There is an apparent literary dependence in Jude 17-18 upon 2 Peter 3:3. In other words, Jude is quoting Peter there and so must have written later.
- C. Jude was accepted as a canonical book early in church history, although it seemed to come after 2 Peter and it included some quotations from secular literature, there was some question about its place in the Bible. Today there is no question among believing people about this matter, but the fact that there were some questions indicates that Jude was likely written after Peter. Had Peter quoted Jude, there would be little room for question about Jude’s canonical status.

### III. Audience, v. 1b

The readers were probably mostly Jewish Christians, although the letter applied no matter what their ethnic background was. At the very least Jude assumed a good knowledge of the Old Testament, which is essential to properly understanding his letter. But Jude's theology is definitely "New Testament," as you can see from how he addresses his readers:

- A. They are **called**, a reference to the Christian doctrine of effectual calling whereby a person is drawn to the Son by the Father. This is not just the *general call* of the gospel—we know this because the readers are actually Christians, not those who have only heard the gospel proclaimed.
- B. **Sanctified**. These are saints, that is, believers set apart from sin, to God, to holiness. All believers are saints, not just "really good dead believers." Some manuscripts have "beloved," also a perfect tense participle different in only a couple of letters in Greek. That the readers are beloved by God is also true.
- C. **Preserved**. God keeps those whom He calls to salvation. This is the doctrine of eternal security and the preservation of the redeemed. This preservation happens through means, and our responsible participation is a big way in which it happens, through faith, until our final salvation is revealed.
- D. All three phrases describe the same group of people. All who are called are sanctified and preserved. None who are called are unsanctified or will be lost.

### IV. Greeting, v. 2

- A. **Mercy**. This is kindness or compassion toward another. Exercised toward us first by God through Christ Jesus, this quality is one we need toward one another, and especially toward unbelievers who need to be saved (verse 22-23).
- B. **Peace**. Again, peace first comes with God and through God, and works in our relationships toward others as well.
- C. **Love**. God first loved us, then we loved Him, and now we are supposed to love others also.
- D. **Multiplied** – the believers already have all of these characteristics *added* to their lives since their salvation. Now he wishes those blessings to be *multiplied*.

### V. Purpose and Need for the Book, v. 3-4

- A. Note that Jude was "very eager" or "making every effort" to write concerning the salvation that he shared with the readers. And this would have been a very worthwhile writing project. Much ink has been well spent over the ensuing centuries writing of this salvation that all true Christians share. We should be as interested in it as Jude was.
- B. But Jude was even more eager to make sure that the saints were protected from false teachers coming into their midst. He is a real shepherd, concerned for the safety of his sheep. So much was this the case that he redirected his writing

energy from a more general epistle about the salvation message that Christians share to the more urgent subject of apostates getting into the churches.

- C. So, he characterizes the false teachers to help the readers identify them, highlights God’s condemnation of the false teachers, and urges the readers to contend for the faith.
- D. To contend for the faith means “to exert intense effort on behalf of” the faith. Jude is writing to *all* Christians to exert great effort, just as Jude himself was very eager to write about it. The term ‘contend’ comes from athletic competition. The Christian life and work are not simple or easy tasks. We know from the start that it will not be easy or “cheap” to live as a Christian, thus the need to count the cost (Luke 14:28). It will be difficult to minister in the face of false teaching; it will be hard to start a new church, or to keep an old one going.
- E. The cause for which one contends is a great one and a unique one—it is the faith which is the gospel preached to the saints. It was handed to them so they would deliver the same thing to the next generation. This faith was once for all entrusted to all Christians. There is only one message, it was given once in the past and God expects us to propagate it faithfully. Any deviation or innovation is not welcomed. There are not multiple faiths or ways to God.
- E. Verse 4 gives the reason why Jude’s writing task is so urgent and necessary. It is because false teachers have secretly arrived. They are perhaps not obvious initially, but they can be spotted. They were condemned from long ago, because any opposition to God has always been grounds for condemnation. They are characterized by three things:
1. **Ungodly.** True godliness is absent from their lives. They may have a thin veneer of piety, but there is really nothing good in them.
  2. **Licentious.** This word refers to an absence of restraint, especially in the area of sexual morality. They take God’s forgiving grace and pervert it or twist it into a license for lewd behavior. “God will forgive me!” they say.
  3. **Rebellious.** They “deny” God and Christ. They do not consider themselves ‘servants’ of Christ like Jude and James. They ‘reject authority’ (v. 8). These ungodly people are their own lords.

Our Lord taught us that you will know false professing Christians by their fruit (Matthew 7:16). Above are three rotten fruits you find on such trees!

## Conclusion

What Jude wrote is as necessary today as it was then. We try our best to keep our churches pure by removing those who are not behaving in a godly fashion. But there is always the danger of new false teachers trying to draw a following. And they don’t have to profess to be teachers: anyone may creep into the church to fulfill their lewd desires, taking advantage of the trusting (and sometimes gullible or uninformed) people in the church.

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