

Jude - Introduction & Background

Author

The name Jude is derived either from Judas or Judah, which means "praise." The name was popular in NT times since Judas Maccabeus successfully led the Jews against the Syrians in the Maccabean revolt (160 BC). Thus, the NT refers to eight persons each bearing the name Jude. First, there are the sons of the patriarch Jacob (Matt 1:2-3; Luke 3:33). Second, there is the physical ancestor of Christ (Luke 3:30). Third, there is the man who betrayed Christ (Mark 3:19). Fourth, there is Thaddeus. He was one of the original twelve and was either the son or brother of James (Luke 6:16; John 14:22; Acts 1:13). Fifth, there was the Galilean insurrectionist (Acts 5:37). Sixth, there was the native of Damascus (Acts 9:11). Paul visited his house a short time after his conversion. Seventh, there is the emissary who accompanied Paul, Barnabas, and Silas to Antioch (Acts 15:22,27,32). This delegation went to Antioch to share with them the decision of the Jerusalem Council. His surname was Barsabbas. It is possible that he was the brother of Joseph Barsabbas, who was one of the two possible candidates to replace Judas (Acts 1:23). Eighth, there is Jude the brother of James (Gal 1:19) and the half brother of Christ (Mark 6:3; Matt 13:55). By process of elimination, this eighth candidate is the best possibility for the authorship of Jude. The writer describes himself as the servant of Christ and the brother of James. Interestingly, he specifically designates himself as the brother of James rather than the son of James. Thus, he must be the brother of the James who wrote the epistle of James and was the leader in the Jerusalem church (Acts 15:13-21). The writer cannot be the apostle Jude since he certainly would have used this title to add authority to his message. Such authenticity would have certainly been necessary given the severity of Jude's topic. In fact, the writer seems to indicate that he did not consider himself one of the apostles (v1,17-18). The other possibilities seem equally remote since he could have easily identified himself with the name Barsabbas or Damascus.

In addition to this internal evidence, the external evidence also points to the eighth candidate as the author of the letter. Such pieces of evidence include Hermas, Polycarp, Theophilus, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Clement of Rome, Barnabas, Epiphanius, the Muratorian Canon, and the Didache. Interestingly, Eusebius categorized Jude with the antilegomena or disputed books rather than the spurious books.

Since Jude the half brother of Christ is the presumed author of the letter, it is helpful to provide some biographical information on him. Jude was one of the four half brothers of Christ who were begotten by Joseph and Mary subsequent to Jesus' birth. Thus, Jude was one of the four younger brothers of Jesus who did not believe in Christ's messiahship early

on (Mark 3:21; 6:3; John 7:3-8) and yet believed in Him after the resurrection (Acts 1:14). It was probably because of this initial unbelief that Jude describes himself as a mere servant of Christ rather than Christ's brother (v1). Jude was eventually converted just as James was (1 Cor 15:7). Apparently, he and his wife had an itinerant preaching ministry (1 Cor 9:5). Although most believe that his death is unknown, it is interesting to note that some observe that "Jude was crucified at Edessa, ancient city of Mesopotamia, about 72 AD."

Canonicity

Some were reluctant to grant the book canonical status on account of its brevity, non-canonical citations (v9,14-15), and lack of a renowned author. However, the letter actually enjoys stronger external attestation than that of 2 Peter. Athenagoras and Clement of Alexandria accepted its canonical status. It was also included in the Muratorian Canon. Didymas, Athanasius, Augustine, and Jerome were among the later writers who accepted the book's canonicity. Early church leaders, such as Tertullian and Origen, also accepted its canonicity. The letter eventually won universal recognition as part of the canon.

Date

How one dates Jude largely depends upon how one handles the apparent interdependence between 2 Peter and Jude. There are numerous parallel citations between these two letters (v4-19; 2 Peter 2:1--3:3).

Jude	2 Peter
3	1:5
4	2:1
6	2:4
7	2:6
8	2:10
9	2:11
10	2:12
11	2:15
12	2:13
12-13	2:17
16	2:18

17	3:2
18	3:3

Jude

4 ungodly men, deny the Lord
6 angels held in eternal chains until judgment day
7 Sodom and Gomorrah, judged by eternal fire
8 they are defiled, reject authority, and slander dignitaries
9 Michael did not slanderously accuse them
10 they are brute beasts that speak evil
11 they followed Balaam's path

2 Peter

2:1
2:4
2:6
2:10
2:11
2:12
2:15

12	<i>They are</i> clouds without water, carried about by the winds	2:17
13	They are wandering stars reserved for eternal darkness	2:17
16	they grumble, complain, lust, and flatter people	2:18
17	this was predicted by the apostles of the Lord	3:2
18	in the last days scoffers are predicted to arrive	3:3

There are three ways to explain these parallels. First, both authors recorded these parallels independent of one another. While such a solution is possible given the fact that the Holy Spirit guided both writers, it is improbable. There are too many similarities. Second, both writers drew from a common source. However, no manuscript evidence has ever been produced testifying to this common source. Third, one writer incorporated the material of another writer. There are two possible ways such incorporation could have happened. First, Peter borrowed from Jude. Under this scenario, Jude wrote before Peter. If 2 Peter was written in 64-66 AD, then Jude should be dated 60-65 AD. Second, Jude borrowed from Peter. Thus, Jude should be dated 68-80 AD. This second option is preferred.

Five arguments support Petrine priority. First, Jude indicates a sudden change in his writing plans (v3). At first he was going to write a treatise on common salvation. He then suddenly changed his plans in order to write about apostasy. This change could have been brought about as a result of reading 2 Peter, which warns of coming apostasy. Second, Peter speaks of the future arrival of false teachers (2 Peter 2:1-2; 3:3) while Jude indicates that they had already arrived (v4,11-12,17-18). Third, Jude's reference to a prior apostolic warning regarding false teachers (v17-18) could refer to the warning previously given by Peter (2 Peter 3:2-4). Fourth, because Jude had a proclivity for citing other sources (v9,14-15), it is likely that he cited 2 Peter as well. Fifth, it is more likely for a prominent apostle to be cited in a letter than for an apostle to cite someone of inferior reputation.

Some date Jude much later than Peter. They argue that v17 indicates that he wrote quite some time after the apostles had taught. But this reference need not indicate that Jude wrote long after the apostles any more than Peter's reference to Paul's writings (2 Peter 3:15) indicates that Peter wrote long after Paul. It is unlikely that Jude wrote in the second century since it would have been more difficult for false teachers to have secretly gained entrance into the more structured church of that era. Also, Jude's failure to mention the death of his brother James as well as the destruction of the temple in 70 AD may push the date of the letter before these events transpired. Moreover, if Foxe is right on the 72 AD death of Jude, then the book obviously must have been written before that point in time. In addition, the similarities between 2 Peter and Jude indicate that Jude was written around the same general time period as 2 Peter. All things being considered, a date of 68-70 AD for the composition of Jude would not be far from wrong.

Recipients

Although never specifically identified, the letter provides several clues about its audience. First, they are believers. This point becomes obvious from v1, which indicates that they are "beloved in God the Father" and "kept for Jesus Christ." Second, they are Jewish. Because of the similarities between 2 Peter and Jude, if it is concluded that the Peter letters were written to Jews, then it must be concluded that Jude was similarly written to a Jewish audience. Also, the audience exhibits a high degree of familiarity with Jewish literature since both the Assumption of Moses and 1 Enoch are referenced in the letter (9,14-15). The audience also exhibited a great knowledge of the OT since their understanding of Old Testament people and events is assumed throughout the letter. Jude alludes to yet never fully explains the Exodus (v5), the death of numerous Israelites in the wilderness (v5), the fallen angels (v6), Sodom and Gomorrah (v7), Moses' body (v9), Cain (v11), Balaam (v11), Korah (v11), Enoch (v14), and Adam (v14).

Third, they are Jews living outside the land in the Diaspora. This determination can be made on the basis of the similarities between 2 Peter and Jude. If it can be shown that the Peter letters were written to Jews in the Diaspora (1 Peter 1:1), then it is likely that Jude is addressing the same audience. Some have sought to pinpoint the location of the audience even further. However this cannot be done with any real accuracy. For example, some say that the audience was located in Syria. Yet why was Jude's letter not accepted into the Syriac Canon until the sixth century? Others have postulated that the audience was in Egypt. However, none of the apostles wrote to the Egyptians (v17). Probably the best guess is that the audience was located in Asia Minor, which was an area that had numerous Jewish communities, had felt Paul's influence, and was overrun by the type of antinomianism spoken of in the letter (Rev 2:14,20). In sum, Jude is addressing Jewish Christians in the Diaspora.

Place of Writing

The place of writing cannot be determined with any real certainty. "There is no real internal clue given as to the place of writing." If Jude was written along with the Peter letters, then it could have been written from Babylon or Rome. Another possibility is that it was written from inside the land of Canaan.

Jude's Opponents

Jude seems to focus more on the heretics themselves rather than the heresy they are promoting. He presumes that his audience is already familiar with the heresy. However, the nature of the heresy can still be noted by putting together key pieces of information found in the letter. For example, the heresy involved rebellion against authority (v8,11,18), a concern for material gain (v11,12,16), a denial of Christ's lordship (v4), insulting angels (v8), yielding to fleshly desires (v16,19), licentiousness (v4,7,8,10,16), flattery (v16), infiltration (v12), perverted grace (v4), divisions (v19), elitism (v19), fault finding (v16), and boasting (v16). Because these characteristics sound so similar to what later became second century

Gnosticism, Green concludes, “Here, in an undeveloped form, are most of the main characteristics which went to make up later Gnosticism—emphasis on knowledge, which emancipated them from the claims of morality; arrogance towards ‘unenlightened’ church leaders; interest in angelology; divisiveness; lasciviousness.” Gnostic dualism, which saw the spiritual world as evil and the physical world as good, led to both asceticism and license. Jude’s opponents gravitated toward the latter. Thus, Jude’s opponents seem to be advocating an early form of what later became second century Gnosticism.

Purpose, Message, and Application

The purpose of the Book of Jude is to warn that the prophecies spoken of in 2 Peter concerning coming apostasy had become a reality. Originally Jude had desired to write a treatise on Soteriology (v3a). He wanted to explain how Jewish believers enjoyed a common salvation with Gentiles (Acts 10–11; 15). However, because false teachers had invaded the church and had begun attacking the doctrines of grace, holiness, and Christ’s Lordship, Jude instead opted to write a letter warning of this apostasy and exhorting believers to contend for the faith and persevere in the midst of such apostasy (v3b–4). The message of Jude is to insulate believers from the effects of apostasy by identifying and condemning the advocates of incipient Gnosticism within the church and to exhort believers to defend themselves in the midst of apostasy by contending for, growing in, and standing firm in the faith. Pentecost nicely summarizes the book’s applicational value when he notes:

The book is a solemn warning to Christians everywhere, since all are subject to the same doctrinal and practical errors. Though its theme regarding apostasy was specifically directed to first-century Jewish Christians, its message is applicable to all Christians. All believers need to avoid the pitfalls of denying Christ’s lordship, promiscuously following the fleshly desires, rejecting authority, being divisive, and living for self.

Sub Purposes

In addition to the above-described overarching purpose, Jude advocated numerous sub purposes in his letter. First, he wanted to urge readers to contend for the faith (v3). Second, he wanted to warn his readers about the apostates (v4). Third, he wanted to furnish the characteristics of these apostates. Fourth, Jude predicted their imminent judgment (v5–16). Fifth, he wanted to remind his readers of previous warnings concerning the arrival of apostasy (v17–19). Sixth, he wanted to show believers how they could grow even in the midst of apostasy (v20–23). Seventh, he wanted to assure believers of God’s continued protection even in the midst of the apostasy (v24–25).

Genre

Although the dominant genre of the letter is epistolary, most would categorize it further as an “epistolary sermon.” In other words, it is a homily. The material found within the letter

would have been a sermon if Jude had addressed his audience directly. However, geographic considerations made this impossible. Thus, Jude's sermon took the form of an epistle. In this regard, the letter seems to be similar to James, Hebrews, and 1 John.

Structure

The letter is comprised of four different sections. The first section records the demand for the letter or why it was written (v1-4). The second section is devoted to a description of false teachers (v5-16). The third section explains to believers how they can defend themselves against false teachers (v17-23). The fourth section is a doxology (v24-25). The first two sections are an anatomy of the apostasy. They provide the reason for contending for the faith. The last two sections give the antidote for apostasy. They explain to readers how to contend for the faith.

Unique Characteristics

The epistle of Jude boasts several outstanding characteristics. First, it cites non-canonical literature more than any other NT writer. For example, it alludes to the *Assumption of Moses* (v9). It also refers to 1 Enoch 1:9; 5:4 (v14-15). Jude is not alone in this practice. Paul made reference to Arastus (Acts 17:28), Epimendes (Titus 1:12), and Menander (1 Cor 15:33). Paul also referred to Jannes and Jambres, which are names found only in extra biblical literature (2 Tim 3:8). However, it must be remembered that a citation of non-canonical material should not be misconstrued as a blanket endorsement of everything recorded in that non-canonical source. By way of analogy, citing Thomas Jefferson does not automatically mean that the person doing the citing agrees with everything that Thomas Jefferson ever said. These non-canonical citations simply mean that the biblical writer under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit happened to cite an item in an extra biblical source because that item happened to be true.

Second, Jude fulfills the prophecies spoken of in 2 Peter. Third, the literary dependence of Jude upon 2 Peter makes the work unique. Both books must be studied together. Fourth, the book uses numerous examples of OT apostasy. Fifth, the book is a "scorching" exposé on false teachers. In fact, with the exception of the salutation (v1-2) and doxology (v24-25), the entire book is dedicated to this subject. Although Paul dealt extensively with this subject, none of his letters are exclusively dedicated to dealing with it. Sixth, Jude also uses triads more than any other NT writer:

v1 - "Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ, a brother of James"

v1 - "called ... loved ... kept"

v2 - "mercy, peace, and love"

v4 - "godless ... change the grace of God ... and deny Jesus Christ"

v5-7 - "Israelites in the wilderness, angels who fell, Sodom and Gomorrah"

v6 - "did not keep ... he has kept ... bound"

v8 - "pollute ... reject ... slander"

- v11 - "Cain, Balaam, Korah
- v12 - "without fruit ... uprooted, twice dead"
- v15 - "ungodly ... ungodly acts ... in the ungodly way"
- v16 - "grumblers ... faultfinders ... following their own evil desires"
- v19 - "divide you ... follow mere natural instincts ... do not have the Spirit."
- v20-21 - "build yourselves up ... pray in the Holy Spirit ... keep yourselves in God's love"
- v20-21 - "the Holy Spirit ... God (the Father) ... our Lord Jesus Christ"
- v22-23 - "Be merciful ... snatch others ... show mercy mixed with fear"
- v25 - "God, Savior, Lord"
- v25 - "before all ages, now and forevermore"

Thus, it is fitting that the book has three main divisions (v1-4,5-16,17-24), and contains the words "keep" (v1,21,24), "these men" (v12,16,19), and "dear friends" (v3,17,20) 3x each.

Seventh, the book uses numerous metaphors from nature. Eighth, it uses numerous figures of speech. Ninth, it has a succinct style. Tenth, it describes false teachers with "descriptive and stinging" words. Eleventh, the letter contains an unusually large number of *hapax legomena* (words used only once in the entire NT). The book has 14 *hapax legomena*. Moreover there are three other terms appearing only in Jude and 2 Peter.

Jude

- 3 *epagwni / zesqai* – "to struggle for, to contend"
- 4 *pareise / dusan* – "to sneak in secretly, or slip in along side of"
- 7 *ekporneu & sasai* – "to commit sexual sin or indulge in immorality"
- 7 *dei = gma* – "sample or example"
- 7 *upe / xousai* – "to undergo suffering"
- 10 *fusikw~j* – "naturally, by instinct"
- 12 *spila&dej* – "stain, spots, blemishes or hidden rocks"
- 12 *fqinopwrina_* – "in late autumn, belonging to it"
- 13 *eOpafri/zonta* – "to foam up"
- 13 *planh~tai* – "wanderer"
- 16 *goggustai* – "grumblers"
- 16 *memyi/moiroi* – "complainers"
- 19 *apodiori/zontej* – "to cause divisions"
- 24 *aptai/stouj* – "free from stumbling"

Three other terms appear only in Jude and in 2 Peter

Jude

- 12 *suneuwxou&menoi* – "to eat together"
- 16 *upe/rogka* – "boastful, puffed up and arrogant"

2 Peter

- 2:13
- 2:18

Outline**I. Demand for the letter (Jude 1-4)**

- (1) Greeting (1-2)
 - (A) Author: Jude, brother of James (1a)
 - (B) Recipients: called, loved, kept (1b)
 - (C) Salutation: mercy, peace, love (2)
- (2) Occasion for the letter (3-4)
 - (A) Old content: common salvation (3a)
 - (B) New content: contend for the faith (3b)
 - (C) Need: advent of the apostates (4)
 - (a) Secretive (4a)
 - (b) Godless (4b)
 - (c) Licentious (4c)
 - (d) Heretical (4d)

II. Description of false teachers (Jude 5-16)

- (1) Denunciation of apostates (5-7)
 - (A) Lessons from history: the Pentateuch (5-7a)
 - (a) Jews: Israel's unbelief (5)
 - (b) Angels: angelic rebellion (6)
 - (c) Gentiles: Sodom and Gomorrah's immorality (7a)
 - (B) Present punishment of apostates (7b)
- (2) Description of apostates (8-13)
 - (A) Angelic realm (8-10)
 - (a) Defile flesh: immorality (8a)
 - (b) Reject authority: rebellion (8b)
 - (c) Revile angelic beings: unbelief (8c-10)
 - (i) Their own slander of the Angels (8c)
 - (ii) Michael's refusal to slander Satan (9)
 - (iii) Their lack of understanding (10)
 - (B) Human realm (11)
 - (a) Cain: opposed to God's basic principles (11a)
 - (b) Balaam: self serving (11b)
 - (c) Korah: rebellious (11c)
 - (C) Natural realm: metaphors from nature depicting apostates' character (12-13)
 - (a) Hidden reefs at love feasts: unsuspectingly harmful (12a)
 - (b) Shepherds feeding themselves: selfish (12b)

- (c) Clouds without rain: unable to deliver what is promised (12c)
 - (d) Trees without fruit: dead (12d)
 - (e) Wild waves: lack of edification (13a)
 - (f) Wandering stars: unstable (13b)
- (3) Doom of apostates (14-16)
 - (A) Prophesied by Enoch (14-15)
 - (a) Source: Enoch (14)
 - (b) Reasons for coming judgment (15)
 - (i) Sinful acts (15a)
 - (ii) Sinful words (15b)
 - (B) Prophesied by Jude: Reasons for coming judgment (16)
 - (a) Grumblers (16a)
 - (b) Fault finders (16b)
 - (c) Lustful (16c)
 - (d) Arrogant (16d)
 - (e) Flatterers (16e)
- III. Defense against apostasy: duties of believers in the midst of apostasy (Jude 17-23)
 - (1) To remember the scriptural warnings of coming apostasy (17-19)
 - (A) Apostolic prophecy (17-18)
 - (B) How apostates fulfill apostolic warnings (19)
 - (a) Divisive (19a)
 - (b) Unscriptural (19b)
 - (c) Devoid of the Holy Spirit (19c)
 - (2) To themselves (20-21)
 - (A) Build yourself up on your faith (20a)
 - (B) Trinitarian example of building one's self (20b-21)
 - (a) Holy Spirit: pray of the Spirit (20b)
 - (b) Father: keep yourself in God's love (21a)
 - (c) Son: await Christ (21b)
 - (3) To others (22-23)
 - (A) To believers: have mercy on doubters (22)
 - (B) To believers under discipline or unbelievers (23)
 - (a) Save some by snatching them out of the fire (23a)
 - (b) Have mercy on some with fear (23b)
- IV. Doxology: Jude praises God (Jude 24-25)
 - (1) Cause for Jude's praise to God: election (24)
 - (A) God will preserve the believer despite the apostasy (24a)
 - (B) God will present the believer in glory (24b)

(2) Content of Jude's praise (25)