

Jude

Authorship: “Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and a brother of James, to those who have been called, who are loved by God the Father and kept by Jesus Christ: Mercy, peace and love be yours in abundance” (Jude 1-2). This Jude was the brother of James and it is believed that he was the half brother of Jesus (Matthew 13: 53-56). Also, it is believed that he did not accept the deity of Jesus until after the resurrection (John 7:5; Acts 1:14). Six other Judes are mentioned in the New Testament, but the fact that the author of this letter did not need to further identify himself or James (a leader in the Jerusalem church) supports the view that he was well known as Christ’s and James’s brother.

Date: Around AD 66-69 before the fall of Jerusalem.

Background, Historical Situation & Unique Features: Jude, like 2 Peter, turned to the Old Testament for illustrations of godlessness and makes clear god’s judgment upon all such persons. Jude employed these illustrations for a number of specific reasons. First, he used them as a means of informing his readers of the serious consequences of unbelief. Israel illustrates unbelief (v.5); the fallen angels illustrate disobedience (v.6); Sodom and Gomorrah illustrate moral defilement (v.7). Second, he thus depicted the character of the false teachers of whom he warns his readers. Cain is a picture of willfulness, Balaam of greed, and Korah of presumption (v.11). Third by way of anticipation, Jude tells what will be the end of the false teachers. Using a quotation from the Jewish work, *The Book of Enoch*, he illustrates what God will do to these “ungodly sinners” (vv.14, 15). In the face of all dangers, the personal responsibility of the believers is to (1) remember the apostle’s teaching (v.17) and (2) keep yourselves in the love of God (v.21). This latter injunction is linked with a number of participial clauses: (a) building yourselves up on your most holy faith (v.20), (b) praying in the Holy Spirit (v.20), (c) looking for mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life(v.21). Along with these, his responsibility to others is (1) to have mercy on some (v.22, 23) and (2) to save some out of the fire (v.23).

Purpose: Scarcely 40 years after Christ’s death, many believers had become lax in doctrine and practice, and there were many false teachers preying upon them. Jude wrote to encourage Christians in their faith and to warn them of false teachers. Again, he wrote to warn his first readers against false teachers and those who have turned against Jesus. He exhorted them to remain strong in the faith and to fight actively against wrong teaching, not merely to avoid it. To Jude, the evil that was sweeping through the churches included immorality, rejection of the clear commands of God, rejection of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, and an outright mockery of holy things. Jude challenges his first readers to “defend the faith.”! This book is primarily a polemic against error rather than a treatise on the truth.

Key Passage: “To Him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before His glorious presence without fault and with great joy” (Jude 24).

Outline:

- I. Salutation (1-2)
- II. Reason for Writing (3-4)
- III. God’s Judgment in the Past (5-7)
- IV. Warning against False Teachers (8-16)
- V. A Call to Persevere (17-23)
- VI. Doxology (24-25)

Sources:

Elwell, Walter A. and Robert W. Yarbrough. *Encountering the New Testament: A Historical and Theological Survey*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1998).
Jensen, Irving L. *Simply Understanding the Bible*. (Minneapolis, MN: World Wide Publications, 1990).
Willmington, Harold L. *Wilmington’s Bible Handbook*. (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1997).