

The Epistle of Jude

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Introduction

Some have questioned the authorship of this short letter, suggesting Jude was not the author. First, because he does not give himself the title of apostle—an objection also raised against James and answered in that letter. Second, because the writer refers to himself as coming after the apostles (verse 17). But Jude does not say he comes

after them in office and authority,
only in time.

Third, because he mentions the dispute over the body of Moses and the prophecy of Enoch, which are not found in Scripture. There were many traditions among the Jews (including about Moses's body), but why shouldn't the Holy Spirit confirm some of them as true through Jude, just as Paul referred to Jannes and Jambres (2 Timothy 3:8), who are known only by tradition, or Moses's trembling at Mount Sinai (Hebrews 12:21), which is not previously mentioned in Scripture? As for the prophecy of Enoch, it appears to have also been a tradition (since Jude does not mention it being written). Even if it were from an

apocryphal book, it would not be unusual for Jude to quote it, just as Paul quotes pagan authors (Acts 17:28; 1 Corinthians 15:33; Titus 1:12).

Fourth, some doubt Jude's authorship because much of this letter is like 2 Peter 2:1-22, suggesting it's not directly inspired. But though many passages agree, there are enough differences to show Jude is not simply copying Peter. And why couldn't the Spirit reveal the same truths to different writers, for different audiences or at different times? Most of Obadiah's prophecy is found in Jeremiah; Psalm 60:1-12 is very similar to Psalm 108:1-13, and Psalm 14:1-7 is very similar to Psalm

53:1-6; Paul, guided by the same Spirit, wrote many of the same things to the Ephesians and the Colossians.

We can truly say the spirit of an apostle is present here; the same authority, purity, and power, and all that shows its Divine origin. It is written to Christian Jews. Its content aligns closely with 2 Peter 2:1-22, and the purpose is mostly the same: to strengthen believers against those who, by their false teachings and immoral lives, secretly bring in evil that can corrupt and mislead others, exposing them to the judgment Jude warns will come upon people like that.

Summary

- **Jude 1:1-3:** After a general greeting, Jude encourages Christians to remain steadfast in the faith they have received.
- **Jude 1:4-19:** He predicts the punishment of false teachers who have secretly entered the church and describes their evil teachings and actions.
- **Jude 1:20-21:** He urges true Christians to persevere in the true faith and in God's love.
- **Jude 1:22-23:** and to work for the reform of others. Jude 1:24-25: He ends by giving glory to God.

Commentary

Jude 1:1

Jude—also called *Thaddaeus* or *Lebbaeus* (Matthew 10:3),

The servant of Jesus Christ—not just in the general sense as a believer, but specifically as an apostle. In the Old Testament, priests and prophets are called God's servants (Psalm 134:1-3, Amos 3:7) and so are ministers in the New Testament (2 Timothy 2:24).

And brother of James—James, the son of Alphaeus (Matthew 10:3). Jude mentions his brother to distinguish himself from Judas Iscariot, and his brother rather than his father, because James was well-

known in the church (Acts 15:1-41; Galatians 2:9; 1 Corinthians 9:5), also to show he agrees with James's teaching and to make his letter more welcome.

To them that are sanctified by God the Father—that is, God as the primary cause of their holiness, working it in believers through the Son by the Spirit.

And preserved in Jesus Christ—their salvation, perseverance, and deliverance are not by their own power; Christ is their King, Head, and Keeper, the Author and Finisher of their faith (Hebrews 12:2), empowered to protect and help them, keeping them by his power for

the salvation he has purchased for them.

And called—with an effective calling, the start of their being made holy, as mentioned before. In Greek, “and” is not present, so it may read, “sanctified by God the Father, kept in Jesus Christ, as called”—meaning those who, being called, are made holy and kept.

Jude 1:2

Mercy unto you—the source of reconciliation and all grace, be yours (see 1 Timothy 1:2; 2 Timothy 1:2; Titus 1:4).

Love—either God’s love for them, or their love for God and each other.

Be multiplied—mercy in its effects, peace in its sense, and either God's love shown to them or their love to God and their neighbors, in greater measure and practice.

Jude 1:3

When I gave all diligence to write unto you—the apostle says his first reason for writing: his own desire, as was his duty as an apostle, to do so—saying, *“being willing and very eager to help you in my absence, by writing.”*

Of the common salvation—the things concerning the salvation we all share, as there is only one salvation and one way to it for all believers.

It was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you—the second reason: the danger they were in, as explained in verse 4.

That ye should earnestly contend—by remaining steadfast in the faith, zealous for truth, living holy lives, encouraging each other, praying, suffering for the gospel, and so on, against those who want to corrupt it.

For the faith—the teachings of the gospel; faith here means the object of faith.

Which was once—because it was given by all the apostles as the only

unchangeable standard for life and salvation, with nothing to add or remove; it was given so you would never leave it, and if you do, you miss salvation, as there will be no other way made known to you.

Delivered unto the saints—by God, not invented by people.

Jude 1:4

Who were before of old ordained—those who were long ago *forewritten* (Greek) about or predicted by Christ and his apostles; or perhaps, as in our translation, those who were long ago ordained, in God's eternal plan—God's will being compared to a book in which events are recorded. Jude says this

to reassure believers that, though these people crept in unexpectedly, it was not outside of God's providence.

To this condemnation—or judgment; it might mean a mind set against God, given over by God as previously determined; or the judgment God decreed for their wickedness in abandoning the faith and misleading others. This fits well with 2 Peter 2:3.

Turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness (immorality)—abusing the message of God's grace and the freedom in Christ to justify all sorts of vile behaviors (2 Peter 2:1).

And denying the only Lord God—

this could mean the Father separately from Christ, or both, since in Greek there is only one article in the whole sentence; but it fits best with the similar passage in 2 Peter 2:1, which refers to Christ, since the false teachings Jude warns about often denied the divinity of Christ, which he affirms here.

Jude 1:5

Though ye once—this may be joined either with the verb following, *knew*, according to our translation, and the sense is, though ye knew this certainly, as the word once is taken (Psalm 89:35) or perfectly and

thoroughly. I want to remind you, even though you already know this.

Having saved the people—after saving the people of Israel.

Afterward destroyed them—God later destroyed those who did not believe, in the wilderness by plague, serpents, and so on.

That believed not—their unbelief was the root of all their disobedience and rebellion, and the main cause of their destruction (see Hebrews 3:17–19, 4:2).

Jude 1:6

Kept not their first estate—in which they were created, their

original excellency, truth, holiness, purity (John 8:44) as well as dignity.

But left their own habitation—

but left their heavenly place (even though God justly cast them out (2 Peter 2:4). They are said to have left by their own choice, rebelling against their creation, committing the sin they knew would bring such punishment.

He hath reserved in everlasting chains—as Peter says, into which they were delivered.

Jude 1:7

The cities about them—The cities near Sodom and Gomorrah—Admah

and Zeboim (Jeremiah 49:18; Hosea 11:8)—like Sodom and Gomorrah.

In like manner—sinned in a similar way and suffered similar punishment.

Strange flesh—other flesh; he means male flesh, other than what God appointed for that use they made of it, i.e. that which is strange, improper, and unfit. It is the description of the unnatural filthiness of the Sodomites, Genesis 19:5 (see Romans 1:26-27).

Are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of

eternal fire—eternal fire may be joined either:

1. As an example, set forth for an example of eternal fire, suffering vengeance; and the meaning is, that the vengeance they suffered in being destroyed by fire, is an example, or type, of eternal fire, that of hell: or:
2. With vengeance, and then the sense is, they are set forth as an example, (that is to those that after should live ungodly, 1 Peter 2:6), suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.

The vengeance they suffer is an example to deter others from the like wickedness. This fire is called eternal, either because of the continuing effects of it, or rather, because it was a type or representation of the fire of hell, and to those Sodomites were brought by these temporal flames into everlasting burnings.

Jude 1:8

Likewise also—in the same way, despite so many examples of God's judgment, these immoral dreamers continue in sin.

These filthy dreamers—defile themselves with sexual sin, dreamed of what they loved, and acted over that filthiness in their sleep, to which they were so much addicted when awake: or metaphorically, and so they are called dreamers, as having the sense of their minds overcome and laid asleep by their sensual pleasures; or being like men in a dream, deluded by their absurd, though pleasing imaginations.

Defile the flesh—this notes all those lascivious practices, to which, like the Sodomites, they had given themselves; and

whereby they defiled themselves and others.

Despise dominion—in their minds, judgments, desires, they reject, make void.

Dominion—not only governors, but government itself.

And speak evil of dignities—either spiritual governors, or rather, civil, called dignities, because of the honorable titles given them, and gifts bestowed on them: see 2 Peter 2:10.

Jude 1:9

Michael the archangel—possibly Christ (who is described as an angel), or a created archangel, one of the chiefs among angels (Daniel 10:13).

When contending with the devil— it may be meant either of Christ contending with the devil, as in Matthew 4:1-25, in his temptation, and Zechariah 3:1,2 and Revelation 12:7; or rather, of Michael, a created angel.

He disputed about the body of Moses—

1. If Michael is Christ, the body of Moses may refer to the body whereof the Mosaic ceremonies were

shadows, Colossians 2:17, i.e. the truth and accomplishment of the law given by Moses; that accomplishment was to be in Christ, who is represented by Joshua, Zechariah 3:1-10. Satan resists him in the execution of his office, and by him strikes at Christ, he was of Christ and whom he afterward opposed when he was come in the flesh.

2. If Michael is a created angel (which fits with Peter's account), then it

refers to Moses's actual body—Michael wanting the location of Moses's grave hidden to prevent it from becoming an object of idolatry (Deuteronomy 34:6). The devil opposed the angel, desiring to have the place of his burial known, that it might be a snare to that people, and a means to bring them to idolatry. Jude probably got this account from Jewish tradition, which is confirmed here.

Durst not bring against him— or could not endure, (as the Greek

word is often taken), or find in his heart, not from fear of punishment, but by reason of the holiness of his own nature, and to give an example to us.

But said, The Lord rebuke thee—

i.e. put you to silence, restrain your insolence, hinder thy design, etc. The angel referred the cause to God.

Jude 1:10

But these speak evil of those things which they know not—

They act by instinct, like unreasoning animals, and in these things destroy themselves (see 2 Peter 2:12).

But what they know naturally—without reason or judgment.

In those things they corrupt themselves—degrade their natures by extreme sensualities, whereby they bring destruction on themselves (see 2 Peter 2:12).

Jude 1:11

Woe to them—a warning, not a curse, either a lamenting the misery that was to come upon them, or a foretelling it would come, not a wishing that it might come on them (see Matthew 11:21; 1 Corinthians 9:16).

For they have gone in the way of Cain—hating their brothers and by their evil doctrines and deceits, murder their souls, and probably stir up persecution against their persons.

And ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward—covetousness, to which being excessively addicted. Or, as the Greek implies, *poured out*, for the sake of gain, they corrupt the doctrine of Christ (see 2 Peter 2:15).

And perished in the gainsaying of Core: Korah—(whom he names alone here, as being the ringleader of the rebellion, in

which others joined with him, Numbers 16:1). Korah affected the priesthood, revolted against Moses and Aaron, and perished. These people in Jude's day imitate him in their rebellion against Christ himself, against the state and against the order in the churches they disturb, in despising dominion, and speaking evil of dignities—to their own destruction.

Jude 1:12

These are spots—(see 2 Peter 2:13).

In your feasts of charity—love feasts, or gatherings for unity and help for the poor.

Feeding themselves without fear—cramming themselves, without respect to God or the church.

Clouds they are without water, carried about of winds—empty, making a show and empty promises (Proverbs 25:14) and changeable (see 2 Peter 2:17).

Trees whose fruit withereth—he compares them to trees that have leaves and blossoms but no fruit.

They are cast out or never brought to maturity, lets it rot instead of ripening. So, these people make a show of truth and holiness, but all comes to nothing.

Without fruit—without any good fruit either in themselves or their followers, who never get any real benefit by them.

Twice dead—wholly dead, or dead over and over, dead by nature and dead by the hardness of the heart they have contracted. It could also refer to that reprobate sense to which God hath given them up.

Plucked up by the roots—never likely to bear fruit and fit only for the fire. It notes the incurableness of their apostacy and their nearness to destruction.

Jude 1:13

Raging waves of the sea—restless and uncontrolled,

Foaming out their own shame—that wickedness they should be ashamed of. Like the troubled sea which cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt (Isaiah 57:20).

Wandering stars—meteor-like always in motion, shining briefly

and then vanishing. The doctrine of these people was like this; a show of light but it was deceitful and changing.

To whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever—the thickest darkness of hell. They think that are lights, but they are cast into utter darkness (see 2 Peter 2:17). The “blackness of darkness” shows the horror of their punishment, and its being “reserved” for them shows the certainty of it.

Jude 1:14

Enoch, the seventh from Adam—to distinguish him from other Enochs or

show the antiquity of his prophecy. Enoch prophesied—not necessarily wrote—about these people. Jude refers to a prophecy known among the Jews, arguing from their own traditions.

Of these—not of these in particular, but what should befall them as well as others for the same kind of crimes.

With ten thousand—innumerable multitudes.

Of his saints—holy angels, (Matthew 16:27; Daniel 7:10; Zechariah 14:5; 2Thessalonians 1:7; Revelation 5:11). Believers

also may be included, as attendants upon Christ when he comes.

Jude 1:15

To execute judgment upon all—either on the wicked in general or else the Greek preposition *kata* is put for *peri*, and the word “all” is to be understood as all universally, good and bad. The words may be read, “to execute judgment over all,” or to “judge all.”

And to convince all that are ungodly among them—if we take the words in the latter sense, then he distinguishes those that are to

be judged into good and bad, and the Lord comes to execute judgment over all, having convinced the wicked among them. But if in the former, the ungodly here may be taken for those that are more notoriously evil, those that have rejected the gospel or perverted it, or persecuted the saints.

Which they have ungodly committed—that is, with an ungodly mind; willingly, delightfully, perseveringly.

Their hard speeches—that is, blasphemous, irreverent, against God and his truth.

Which ungodly sinners have spoken against him—he executes judgment on all the wicked, but especially on these who are the worst of sinners.

Jude 1:16

Murmurers, complainers—these two words signify the same thing. Or, “murmurers” may refer to God’s decrees, laws, providences and the ordinations in the church or state, (1 Corinthians 10:10), and “complainers” refer to their own condition with which they were discontented.

Walking after their own lusts—

regard neither the law of God nor of man but making their own lusts the law which leads them (2 Peter 2:10).

And their mouth speaketh great swelling words—

slaves to their own lusts yet they talk big and use high language so that they would be applauded and admired (see 2 Peter 2:18).

Having men's persons in admiration because of

advantage—flattering greater and richer men so that they get gain from them.

Jude 1:17

Jude refers especially to Paul and Peter (Acts 20:29; 2 Peter 3:2). This suggests the letter was written late, probably after most apostles except John had died.

Jude 1:18

Told you—whether in their preaching or writing.

Ungodly lusts—in the Greek, lusts of ungodliness; a Hebrew way of speaking to refer to the most evil lusts.

Jude 1:19

These be they who separate themselves—that is from the true doctrine and Church of Christ.

They are in love with their carnal lusts and liberties and refuse to come under the yoke of Christ's discipline.

Sensual—or carnal or animal (1 Corinthians 2:14), such as men who have no higher principle in them than human nature which when left to itself has not the sanctifying of the Holy Spirit and is overpowered by sense and fleshly lusts.

Having not the Spirit; the Spirit of God—by which they should be led, but they do not have the light, grace, nor comfort of the Spirit.

Jude 1:20

Building up yourselves—he compares them to a house, which is to be built up. Faith is the foundation (see 1 Corinthians 4:9; Ephesians 2:20-22; 1 Peter 2:5 where the same metaphor is used).

Most holy—faith is the means of purifying their hearts and working holiness in them. It is in opposition to the false faith of the heretics which leads to impurity.

Faith—this may be understood either:

1. The grace of faith, the first and principal grace in a Christian, which is necessary as a foundation, and through which they are to build themselves up in other graces which follow from faith (2 Peter 1:5).
2. The doctrine of faith, as that on which their faith itself is founded. The meaning then is, that they should not rest satisfied in what measure of faith they had already attained, but still be improving it and making further progress

in it. They should not only hold fast the truth of the gospel but get themselves more confirmed in the belief of it, by the study and meditation of the Word.

Praying in the Holy Spirit—by his help, who teaches what to pray for, and gives faith and energy for prayer (Romans 8:26–27).

Jude 1:21

Keep yourselves in the love of God—in love to God or the love you have for God. This implies love to each other.

Looking for—by hope. In these two verses then, we have the three cardinal graces, faith, hope, and charity (1 Corinthians 13:13).

The mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life—the merciful or gracious judgement of Christ whereby he gives believers eternal life (Matthew 25:34). This reward of eternal life is promised out of mercy, and it is called mercy (2 Timothy 1:18).

Jude 1:22

And of some have compassion—gently and mildly reproofing and

admonishing them, so that you may gain them.

Making a difference—two sorts of offenders who might be restored and they should be dealt with in different ways. First, those who might be discouraged with harshness should be handled with more tenderness and compassion.

Jude 1:23

And others—others who are further gone are not so easily brought back.

Save—be careful to save them as instruments under God.

With fear—by more severe and sharper rebukes, showing them God's judgments against stubborn sinners (1 Corinthians 5:5).

Pulling them out of the fire—this is a proverbial speech (Zechariah 3:2) and the sense is that as they that are in the fire and likely to be destroyed by it, they must not be gently exhorted to come out of it of themselves, but speedily and forcibly pulled out of it. It is a reference to the eminent danger of more stubborn sinners, at the mouth of hell, who must be more harshly and severely dealt with, by

setting the judgement of God before them (2 Corinthians 5:11) and by laying on them the censures and discipline of the Church.

Hating even the garment spotted by the flesh—a reference to that ceremonial law (Leviticus 15:4,17) where the person that touched a defiled garment was himself defiled. The sense is either,

1. That where there is danger of infection and influence from heretics and obstinate sinners, all interaction with them

should be avoided. Or,

2. That when we rebuke others and seek to save them, we should hate their sins.

Jude 1:24

Able to keep you from falling—

from stumbling in your spiritual walk, and able to make you persevere to the end.

Before the presence of his

glory—or, his glorious presence, or before himself (Ephesians 5:27). Having exhorted these saints to perseverance in the faith, Jude now tells them in whose strength they must stand, and to

whom they are to give the glory of it.

Jude 1:25

To the only wise—infinitely wise and of himself.

God our Saviour—either God, who is sometimes called by this title (1 Timothy 2:3; Titus 1:3, 3:4), or Christ who is God incarnate.

Be glory—see (1 Peter 4:11; 5:11).

And majesty—magnificence (Hebrews 1:3, 8:1). This seems to signify the height and excellency of God's glory.

Dominion and power—authority and right to govern, which is ascribed to God here, as well as the strength and sufficiency for it.