

65– Jude: Stand for the Truth Amid Growing Apostasy

- The author of this short letter is **Jude, brother of James, half brother of Jesus**. Jesus’ own brothers did not believe in Him during His ministry (Mark 6:3), but became believers after His resurrection. Jesus’ brothers were part of the group praying when the Holy Spirit came (Acts 1:14).
- Jude **does not address a particular group, but all who are “called”** and sanctified (*the word used here in Greek is actually “loved” making this a much more personal note*) by God, and preserved by Jesus Christ. In other words, all true believers. The text from the Complete Jewish Bible makes this verse very dear to us: **“Those who have been called, who are loved by God the Father and kept for Yeshua the Messiah.”** What a wonderful assurance! Jude calls believers “saints” which means “set apart” to God. We are also preserved (*watched and guarded*). The same word, which is a warning, is used of the fallen angels and apostates, but they are preserved for judgment.
- Jude said he started out to write a letter of encouragement for believers and praise to God for His salvation, but now has apparently changed his mind and his letter’s theme. **Already believers needed to be aware of and be on guard against not only false teachers, but false believers.** Even today the “church” is full of apostates. Jude emphasizes this false faith by using the word “ungodly” several times.
- Peter warned that false teachers and apostates would come, and now Jude writes to warn the same believers that they are already here. He reminds them to **take Peter’s warnings seriously**. There are many interesting parallels in this short letter between Jude and 2 Peter. This letter is like a “call to arms,” a serious warning for believers. The primary false doctrine of those days was most likely Gnosticism, but any deviation from the truth is false teaching. Today the church is bombarded by all kinds of false teachings and false teachers. Those who deny the deity of Jesus, or the infallibility of the Word of God, or think that the Bible is just a book of myths, but good teachings. Today the blood atonement of Jesus is not preached. The uneducated “believer” is in dire peril of losing the Truth in these places, and these warnings are perhaps even more needed today.
- The **apostates were already in their midst**, meeting with them, and taking part in their feasts together. They said all the right things, outwardly looked like believers, but were inwardly rebellious, and not true believers. The believers were at risk of being swayed from the truth by those who did not fully embrace it, just as we are today.
- We need to remember that an apostate is not a true believe who has abandoned his or her faith. This is a person who says he or she is a believer (wears a label, so to speak), but does not truly believe, nor act their so-called faith. Sometimes only God can see the heart of an apostate. He is judge, not us.



Highlights

Salutation, v1-2	Jude, brother of James (half brothers of Jesus) identified as writer
original intent, change of plans, v3	Jude wanted to write about salvation but has heard of apostasy in the midst of believers, and now writes as a warning, and call to contend for the faith.
Problem of apostasy present, v4	Ungodliness in their midst, crept in undetected (lewdness and denial of deity of Jesus)
God will always judge ungodliness, v5-7	Examples of deliverance of Israel, then destruction of those who didn’t believe later; fallen angels reserved in chains for judgment; Sodom and Gomorrah.
Ungodly speak evil of “dignitaries,” v 8-10	Apostates called “dreamers [who] defile the flesh, reject authority, and speak evil of dignitaries” (this is dangerous!) as Michael didn’t even do so to the enemy himself while dealing with Satan over the body of Moses. Should instead give it to the Lord who does the rebuking. These apostates act like animals, corrupt themselves.

Warning to these apostates, v11-13	Woe! Compares them to Cain, Balaam, and Korah of OT (those who paid a price for their rebellion); calls them “clouds without water...trees without fruit, twice dead, pulled up by the roots.” They “foam up their own shame” and they are reserved for the “blackness of darkness forever.”
Enoch’s prophecy, v14-15	References prophecy by Enoch of Lord’s return with His saints, to bring judgment on all ungodly.
Description of apostates, v16	Called “grumblers, complainers” who pursue their own lusts, are arrogant and full of grand words, flatters for personal gain.
Remember warnings from Jesus’ apostles, v17-19	Call to remember the words of Jesus’ apostles (probably Peter, Paul) about false teachers, mockers, and those who would walk according to their own ungodliness. They cause division and do not have the Spirit.
Admonition to True Believers, v20-23	Believers called “beloved,” called to build ourselves up in our faith, pray in the Holy Spirit, stay in God’s love, look for the mercy of Jesus to eternal life. Show compassion, but make a “distinction” (apparently between apostates and true believers). If necessary, save those in peril of slipping away from the Truth, with fear of judgment.
Benediction and Promise, v24-25	God is able to keep us from stumbling and present us faultless. Our Savior and God alone is wise, and due all glory, majesty, dominion and power always.

- Jude **describes the apostates** as: 1) ungodly, 2) deceitful (*they came in secretly, under the radar, so to speak*), 3) enemies of God’s grace (*as they taught a different “gospel” using the scripture to defend their false doctrines.*) They are especially dangerous to new believers, not yet grounded in the Word and doctrines of God, 4) deniers of God’s truth, and the deity of Jesus Christ. Because of these things, these people are set aside for judgment. They used “religion” as a cloak for lies and darkness. Religion is manmade. True believers have faith, not religion.
- Jude emphasizes that the church is “always one generation short of extinction” as one commentator put it. **It is up to the current generation of believers to protect and stand for the truth.** Jude says to “contend for the faith.” The word used here implies an active, athletic full blown “struggle.” It is a Greek word from which we get our English “agonize.” That implies that this contention or struggle for the faith and the truth can be difficult, exhausting, and even very costly for believers. It is not a simple process, or something to be taken lightly. It is a serious life battle. False doctrine is deadly. It is sometimes a battle to balance contention with *being contentious*. We are still to speak the truth...in love...but firmly.
- Jude uses **examples of judgment** of those who resisted the truth, including God’s deliverance of Israel over her enemies, but his judgment on the unbelievers after this event; the fallen angels, and Sodom and Gomorrah. He shows God’s deliverance of the righteous and His judgment of the ungodly. His point is that God will judge these apostates, and all others. We (true believers) are preserved for life with God, they are preserved for judgment. There is no escaping either state.
- Fallen angels: **“And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day;...”** (v. 6) This subject is full of continuing controversy, involving the passages in Genesis 6 that deal with the reasons for the Flood. There are two basic lines of thought regarding these beings in the Genesis passage, one that they somehow came to earth and cohabitated with the “daughters of men” to produce a race of giants (the *Nephillim*, literally “fallen ones”), thus polluting the gene pool one of the major reasons and need for the Flood. Other commentators and scholars hold differing positions. We are not going to deal with these issues here (*there is a wide array of commentary available on this subject*), but obviously Jude is referencing spiritual beings that have fallen from grace with God, literally “fallen angels,” and are being reserved for judgment by Him. We don’t know for sure if their fall is associated with that hinted at in Genesis 6 or not. They obviously rebelled and left their intended “abode.” For their rebellion, they are currently in “everlasting chains” and are reserved for judgment in the last day. This reference in Jude may or may not relate to the ongoing debate regarding the “sons of God” and the “daughters of men” in Genesis 6. This is used as an example of rebellion and ungodliness that God promises to judge. The reference to Sodom and Gomorrah is offered for the same reason, to underscore the undeniable fact that God will judge all evil.

- **Prophecy of Enoch:** Jude apparently had access to the early writings of Enoch, the man of Genesis who “walked with God.” He states: **“Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, “Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.”** (Jude 14-15) There are many things we can learn from these simple verses, which were apparently familiar and available to Jude’s audience: 1) This is the oldest prophecy spoken by a prophet, given even before the flood, and it is about the second coming! 2) The saints (all true believers) will accompany Jesus on His return, which would seem to indicate that we will already be with Him when He returns (pre-Trib rapture?); 3) this is the ultimate prophecy and warning that God will judge evil – ungodliness.
- Jude also speaks about these “dreamers” (the apostates) who speak against “dignitaries:” **“Likewise also these dreamers defile the flesh, reject authority, and speak evil of dignitaries. Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, “The Lord rebuke you!” But these speak evil of whatever they do not know; and whatever they know naturally, like brute beasts, in these things they corrupt themselves.”** (v.8-10) The word in Greek for “dignitaries” actually means those deserving glory, praise, honor. This may indicate spiritual dignitaries, as Jude’s example seems to be speaking of. The writer, and his readers, may have had some knowledge of this event that has been lost to us. He warns about speaking evil to ANY spiritual entity, as even Michael, the great archangel, would not speak evil directly to Satan himself. An interesting warning for us. Jude’s tone in all this is that these dreamers are exceptionally arrogant, and ignorant, and are playing with the fire of judgment.
- Jude uses very strong, serious, and descriptive language to underscore the truth of God’s judgment of the wicked unbelievers – the ungodly, which includes those who may call themselves “Christians” but do not know or love Jesus, or live lives pleasing to Him. **“Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit, and perished in the rebellion of Korah. These are spots in your love feasts, while they feast with you without fear, serving only themselves. They are clouds without water, carried about by the winds; late autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, pulled up by the roots; raging waves of the sea, foaming up their own shame; wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.”** (v. 11-13) Not a very pretty picture, but an adequate and impactful warning.

If we know the Truth of God’s Word, and His Son the Truth, and we heed the warnings of Peter and now Jude in this letter, we can be assured that we will spend eternity with Jesus. Jude closes this short but serious warning letter with a promise and a praise:

*“Now, to the one who can keep you from falling
and set you without defect and full of joy
in the presence of his Sh'khinah to God alone,
our Deliverer, through Yeshua the Messiah, our Lord
be glory, majesty, power and authority before all time,
now and forever. Amen.”*

(from The Complete Jewish Bible, David H. Stern)