

Jude

After the Holy Spirit empowered the followers of Jesus on the day of Pentecost, the church multiplied. It began to spread out from Jerusalem in every direction, and new people were hearing the Good News about Jesus across the world. However, as the church grew, false teachers began to sneak into the church. Jude says that these people are “ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord” (4). Jude writes with strong words to warn believers about the false teachers and encourage the believers to keep themselves in God's love as they wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring them to eternal life (21).

Writer: Jude, younger brother of Jesus

Date of writing: Between 65-80 AD

Original Audience: Jude addresses his letter to “To those who have been called, who are loved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ” (1). Jude did not write this letter to a specific church but to all followers of Jesus everywhere.



The Reason for the Letter:

Jude clearly states his reason for writing the letter in verses 3 and 4, saying, “Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt compelled to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to God’s holy people. For certain individuals whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you.” Jude is writing to warn the believers not to follow these false teachers. He also encourages them to follow Jesus faithfully.

The Main Message of the Letter:

The letter opens with a greeting and blessing (1–2). Jude explains that ungodly people have entered the community who pervert the grace of God and freedom in Christ into a license for immorality (3–4). He reminded the believers of the times in the Old Testament when God punished the wicked (5–7). Jude promised that these evildoers who “pollute their own bodies” would likewise be destroyed (8–10). He pronounces a prophetic “woe” or curse upon them using various examples to explain what these people are like (11–16). The letter concludes with an encouragement to remain faithful (17–23) and to God, who can keep people from falling (24–25).

Jude, James, and Other Brothers of Jesus

In the Gospels, we learn that Jesus had four brothers: James, Joses, Jude (or Judas), and Simon. He also had an unknown number of sisters whose names are also unknown (Mark

6:3). Since James is listed first, he is considered the oldest of these brothers, but he might be listed first because he was the most well-known. We also learn in the Gospels that the brothers of Jesus did not believe in him during the time of his ministry (John 7:5). At one point, “they went to take charge of him, for they said, ‘He is out of his mind.’” (Mark 3:21). After Jesus’ resurrection, their belief about Jesus changed. Paul says the risen Jesus appeared to James (1 Corinthians 15:7). The book of Acts says that the brothers of Jesus were part of the church in Jerusalem (Acts 1:14) and were present for the Holy Spirit’s arrival on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1–4). A short while later, James appears to be the leader of the church in Jerusalem (Acts 12:17; 21:18). Paul also acknowledges James’s importance as a leader in the church in Galatians (Galatians 1:19; 2:6, 9). Paul refers to the Lord’s brothers as missionaries (1 Corinthians 9:5). Jude likely was one of the brothers that traveled as a missionary sharing the Good News about his older brother Jesus.

2 Peter and Jude

The letters of 2 Peter and Jude are very similar, and both speak against the same problem. Peter and Jude were most likely writing about the same people. The people spreading dangerous ideas in both letters appear to have several things in common:

- They are community members who have turned away from true teachings (2 Peter 2:15, 21–22; Jude 12).
- They operate secretly and show no respect for church leaders (2 Peter 2:1, 10; Jude 4; 8).
- They profit from what they are doing and are motivated by a love for money (2 Peter 2:3; Jude 11).
- They flatter people, fooling them into thinking that they have their interests at heart (2 Peter 2:14, 18; Jude 16).
- They live a morally corrupt lifestyle (2 Peter 2:10, 13; Jude 8; 18).
- They tempt people into immoral living, possibly including immoral sexual behavior (2 Peter 2:2, 10, 14, 18; Jude 7–8; 16).

As you read through this short letter, you may be shocked by the strong language Jude uses. Read through the letter a second time and think about the dangerous situation Jude describes. What is the danger? Jude encourages the faithful believers to “save others by snatching them from the fire” (23). Jude understands that people are in great danger by following these false teachers and spending eternity separated from God. Consider and discuss the following questions:

1. What do we learn from this letter?
 2. What do we need to do?
 3. Who else needs to hear this letter?
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