

JUDE – CONTENDING FOR THE GOSPEL OF JESUS

Authorship: Jude was the brother of James of Jerusalem (Gal. 1:19) and the half brother of Jesus (Mark 6:3)

- Jude is mentioned among the other brothers of Jesus (Mark 6:3) and was himself not an apostle (v17-18)
- Jude likely did not emphasize his family relationship to Jesus in order to highlight that he was a servant of Jesus
- Jude may have been married and taken missionary journeys with his wife (1 Corinthians 9:5)
- Disputes regarding Jude's authorship center around his use of apocryphal works and similarities to 2 Peter
- Numerous early writers reference Jude including Pseudo-Barnabas (70-130AD), Clement of Rome (95-97AD), Shepherd of Hermas (115-140AD), Polycarp (110-150AD), and the Didache (120-150AD)

Date: dates between 60-140AD have been suggested, but the letter was most likely written between 60-70AD

- Jude was likely the youngest of Jesus' brothers in light of the order in the Gospels (Mk. 6:3; Mt. 13:55). A reasonable life expectancy would not allow a date much later than 70-90AD.
- The fact that an established doctrine of faith had formed does not necessitate a late date (cf. Rom. 6:17).
- There was an abundance of false teachings in the early church, so there is no need to tie the author's warning to any one error. We certainly should not require a 2nd century date to accommodate full-blown Gnosticism.

Audience: Jude is writing to an unspecified community of believers who have heard the Apostle's teachings

- The "called," "beloved," and "kept" of v1 could refer to any Christians, but the language used by the author seems to imply personal knowledge of this congregation (v3-5, 17-18, 20).
- The author assumes they have knowledge of the Old Testament (v5-7) and Jewish secondary sources. This has persuaded some that the church consisted primarily of Jewish converts. I do not think we can be conclusive.

Purpose: Jude urgently called the church to contend for the Gospel because false teachers had infiltrated the flock

- Jude desired to write a letter concerning their common salvation, but the Spirit led him to write this warning.
- Jude warns church members to not be swept away by the deceivers and to rescue those who had (v23).
- We cannot discern the nature of the error the wolves were spreading. They had snuck into the church (v4), were twisting grace (v4), denying truths about Jesus (v4), and claiming their personal revelations were superior to Scripture (v8). Their lives were marked by lawless behavior (v4, 7, 16, 18), being ruled by their passions (v8, 23), and being characterized by arrogant pride (v11, 16). Jude is combatting these perversions.

Relationship to 2 Peter

- There are enough similarities to ensure that one of the authors borrowed from the other. Many of the words and phrases are identical and at least 15 of Jude's 25 verses appear in 2 Peter.
- While much effort has been made to determine which epistle is dependent upon the other, it is really impossible to say. The best argument I've come across suggests that because Jude is shorter, it likely preceded 2 Peter who used it as a source while composing his own letter against false teaching.

Old Testament References

- v5 Exodus Generation (Numbers 14; 1 Corinthians 10:1-13; Hebrews 3-4)
- v6 Angels in Noah's Day (Genesis 6:1-4; 2 Peter 2:4)
- v7 Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19; Matthew 10:15)
- v11 Way of Cain (Genesis 4:1-16)
- v11 Balaam's Error (Numbers 22-24; Deuteronomy 23:4-5; Revelation 2:14)
- v11 Korah's Rebellion (Numbers 16)

Pseudepigraphal¹ Writings Referenced

- The Book of Enoch (v6, 13-15) and Assumption of Moses (v9) are the most clearly referenced works.
- The Testament of Naphtali (v6) and Testament of Asher (v8) may be alluded to.
- Non-canonical texts such as these mentioned included true statements, which the Holy Spirit led Jude to use.
- Jude's use of these extra-canonical writings is no way an endorsement of their inspiration (cf. Acts 17:28).

OUTLINE OF JUDE

1:1-3 – The Church Must Contend for the Gospel

1:4-16 – The Church Must Be Wary of Wolves

1:4 – *False Teachers Creep Into the Church*

1:5-7 – *False Teachers Face a Familiar Destiny*

1:8-10 – *False Teachers Reject Authority*

1:11-16 – *False Teachers face Woe for their Wickedness*

1:17-23 – The Church Must Keep Itself In God's Love

1:24-25 – The Church Is Kept By God's Faithfulness

¹ *pseudepigrapha* means "to write falsely." The term comes from the Greek *pseudo*, which means "false," and *epigraphein*, which means "to write / inscribe". Pseudepigraphical works were composed between 200BC and 300AD by unknown authors who used well-known Bible character names to attract readership. These are not inspired works, and therefore are not in the canon.