

Jude

Authorship

The author identifies himself as the brother of James. The only James likely to be mentioned in this way is the half-brother of Jesus, leader of the Jerusalem church. They are mentioned together in Matthew 13:55 and Mark 6:3.

Date.

Robinson thinks that Jude was written prior to 2 Peter and dates them both c. A.D. 62.¹ This is because he fixes Peter's death in that year. This is probably not a correct date for Peter's death, which Finegan places in A.D. 67.² What Robinson does demonstrate is that Jude does not have to have been written later than A.D. 70. A date of A.D. 68/69 would satisfy the priority of 2 Peter and not be inconsistent with internal data regarding the heresy in view and the situation of the readership.

Original Readers.

There is no indication of the locality of the readers, though Jude displays a close acquaintance with them and knowledge of the presence of certain apostates. Guthrie concludes that the readers lived in "a predominantly Jewish-Christian community in a Gentile environment."³ He thinks it may have been directed to a region in Palestine, perhaps Antioch, while Robinson opts for predominantly Jewish-Christian congregations in Asia Minor.⁴

Occasion.

Jude had been intending to write to this group about their common salvation (perhaps he was already working on such a letter—v. 3). However, he found himself compelled to address the threat posed by certain apostates who had wormed their way into their fellowship and were promoting their heresy to the potential damage of their Christian faith and walk.

¹ John A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1976), 198.

² In fact, June 29, A.D. 67 to be precise! Jack Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology* rev. ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1998), 387.

³ Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 4th ed. rev. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 914.

⁴ *Ibid.*; John A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1976), 198.

Special Issues

Relationship to 2 Peter. The fact that most of 2 Peter 2 is paralleled in Jude raises the question of relationship. There are three possibilities: (1) Jude is prior to 2 Peter (2) 2 Peter is used by Jude (3) they both used the same source.⁵ A majority hold that Peter used Jude. Guthrie concludes that it is impossible to prove any of the views but favors the priority of 2 Peter and Jude's borrowing from him.⁶ In this case Peter has set the stage for what will happen in the future, and Jude has picked up on that, writing about what is presently taking place with regard to the false teachers.⁷

Use of apocryphal books. In verses 9 and 14 Jude is apparently citing from the books of the *Assumption of Moses* and *1 Enoch*, though the former is not extant. The issue is whether Jude himself considered these books to be canonical and how incorporation of such material (however he viewed the sources) affected his own work with respect to canonicity. The solution to the problem lies in distinguishing between literary sources or parallels and truthful statements. Just because a statement that is truthful appears in a certain book, it does not make that book Truth. Jude nowhere claims the authority of Scripture for his statements (and in fact does not even indicate that he is using a source). There were many current traditions about ancient events, some of which were obviously true. The real issue is how Jude ascertained the truthfulness of his assertions, not where else they may be found. At the heart of the issue is the nature of the process of revelation and inspiration itself. As Hodges observes, "Certainly Jude had as good an opportunity as anyone to learn the truth or falsity of many current traditions. It is hardly thinkable that the curious disciples never inquired about these things from our Lord and a word from Him on any of these matters would be conclusive."⁸

Message

Believers must contend for the faith because there will always be unscrupulous apostates undermining it.

⁵ See Guthrie, *Introduction*, 916-25.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 923-2; Hodges also favors the priority of 2 Peter: Zane C. Hodges, "Jude," unpublished class notes, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1972, 1-2.

⁷ Guthrie, *Introduction*, 921.

⁸ Hodges, "Jude," 3.

Outline

I.	Salutation: Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ, writes to other believers.	1-2
II.	Preamble: Jude admonishes the readers to contend for the faith.	3-4
	A. This, because it has been finally, authoritatively delivered.	3
	B. This, because it is being secretly undermined.	4
	1. It is being undermined by ungodly men.	4a
	2. It is being undermined by an assault on the truth.	4b
	a. Grace is being turned into licentiousness.	4b
	b. The Father and Son are being denied.	4b
III.	Body: Jude reveals the character and conduct of the apostates in their threat to the faith.	5-23
	A. The Apostates renew ancient rebellion against the rule of the Lord.	5-11
	1. The reasons for past judgments are reviewed.	5-7
	a. Ungrateful unbelief was judged in the wilderness.	5
	b. Angelic impropriety has been bound over for judgment.	6
	c. Sexual immorality was judged by eternal fire.	7
	2. The present character demanding judgment is revealed.	8-11
	a. They are blasphemous in their attitude.	8-10
	b. They are rebellious in their action.	11
	B. The Apostates represent an incipient threat to the body of Christ.	12-23
	1. They establish a false presence in the assembly.	12-15
	a. They are capable of no positive contribution.	12-13
	b. They are culpable as ungodly sinners.	14-15
	2. They promote a selfish lifestyle through their complaining.	16-18
	a. They serve themselves through false flattery.	16
	b. They must be marked as mockers of the truth.	17-18
	3. They produce divisions instead of edification.	19-23
	a. They cause divisions, being without the Spirit.	19
	b. They must be countered in the Spirit.	20-23
	1) Through attention to personal edification.	20-21
	2) Through attention to corporate edification.	22-23
IV.	Doxology: To Him who is able to establish and present as faultless.	24-25

Argument

In a short letter that is full of the pronouncement of judgment upon unscrupulous apostates who undermine the faith, one of Jesus' half-brothers admonishes believers to contend for its authority. Everything about Jude and his presentation is based on external authority while everything about those whom he condemns smacks of man himself as the authority for his own shameful behavior. The faith has been finally and authoritatively delivered by the apostles (3, 17); for that reason the believer should contend with the apostates for the faith.

I. Salutation: Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ, writes to other believers (1-2).

Jude does not seek to establish his authority by appeal to a knowledge of Jesus

according to the flesh, though this would have had weight. Instead he counts himself as a servant of Jesus and brother of James, one who was recognized as an authority in the Jerusalem church. Hence, Jude writes as one servant to others for the cause of the faith which has both the ancient and present authority of God Himself.

II. Preamble: Jude admonishes the readers to contend for the faith (3-4).

Jude states his purpose for writing in positive and negative terms. The faith has been delivered once and for all and must, therefore, be supported and promoted (3). His urgency in writing derives from the fact that unscrupulous apostates have begun to undermine the faith by perverting grace and denying its Author (4).

III. Body: Jude reveals the character and conduct of the apostates in their threat to the faith (5-23).

A. The Apostates renew ancient rebellion against the rule of the Lord (5-11).

The character and conduct of such apostasy is not new. In fact such rebellion and impropriety were evident in ancient times and were appropriately judged by God (5-7). In the same vein, the current apostates clearly evidenced a blasphemous attitude (8-10) and rebellious pattern of behavior, Cain, Balaam and Korah being notable examples (11).

B. The Apostates represent an incipient threat to the body of Christ (12-23).

The modern apostates would be judged for the same reasons that God judged the ancient apostates, namely, their destructive influence upon the Lord's people. Three such influences are noted, along with an accompanying result or admonition.

1. They establish a false presence in the assembly (12-15). These individuals were associating with the church in its Lord's supper observance as though they had something to contribute (much like Cain's false worship), when in reality they were only a source of defilement (12-13). They would be fully exposed as ungodly sinners when God judged them (14-15).

2. They promote a selfish lifestyle through their complaining (16-18). Like Balaam, they were only out for their own profit, of which murmuring and complaint are always tell-tale signs (16-17). Apostolic testimony had foretold the arrival of these mockers (18). In this way Jude skillfully directs the saints attention to the true authority of apostolic tradition.

3. They produce divisions instead of edification (19-23). Like the schismatic Korah, who was spiritually unqualified for what he sought to do, these apostates only created

divisions (19). To counter their destructive spirit the believers needed to give close attention to their own spiritual health and vitality and to a ministry of correction and restoration within the assembly (20-23). In this way the faith would continue to be the clear and powerful herald of salvation once for all established by apostolic ministry.

IV. Doxology: To Him who is able to establish and present as faultless (24-25).

This ministry of correction and restoration was possible because God Himself was present to deliver and preserve (24). For this reason He alone is worthy of worship and dominion (25).

Jude's message has continuing relevance, as Guthrie observes: "If the examples Jude cites for his own day . . . had relevance then, his whole epistle must have relevance now, until the nature of divine justice and the character of human lasciviousness and kindred evils has changed. As long as men need stern rebukes for their practices, the Epistle of Jude will remain relevant. Its neglect reflects more that superficiality of the generation that neglects it than the irrelevance of its burning message."⁹

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⁹ Guthrie, *Introduction*, 926.