

# Jude

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## Introduction

Jude is recognized as one of the shortest books in the Bible, along with 2 and 3 John, Haggai, and Philemon. Like each of these books Jude's serious theological message explains why it was early included in the Christian canon.

Commentary wise, almost all commentaries include Jude along with 1 and 2 Peter, not because of the brevity of these epistles, but because they draw on similar literary verbal traditions. An interesting debate among most scholars is which was the original writing, Jude copied by Peter, or Peter copied by Jude? Or perhaps, which original tradition was the foundation for both Jude ad Peter?

Several interesting features or factors surface in this comparative study; *authorship*, *origin*, *eschatological apocalyptic* genre, the inclusion of traditional *apocryphal* references in each.

## Bibliography

*The Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*

*The Tyndale Bible Dictionary*

*The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*

Baucham, Richard, *2 Peter, Jude*, vol 50, Word Biblical Commentary, 2010.

Green, Gene, L., *Jude and 2 Peter*, Baker Exegetical Commentary, 2008.

Schreiner, Thomas R., *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, New American Commentary, 2003.

## Date, Destination, Recipients

Although there are different observations among scholars, there is some uniformity. We will work with the tentative assumption that most evangelical scholars are “*comfortable*” with ***the author*** being *Jude, the brother of James, and possibly the brother of Jesus*. ***The date*** late 1<sup>st</sup> century CE, 60-08 CE. ***The recipients*** being *Jewish Christians in Syria*, which makes Jude somewhat parallel to Matthew's Gospel.

*The Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* observes, “***Date, Origin, Destination***. About date, origin, and destination, the letter says nothing directly. Since the content of the faith is clearly fixed (Jude 3) and the recipients have personally heard the apostles (who have apparently died already, Jude 17), the date must be *later than AD 60 and earlier than 100*.”

Jude may have written from Galilee in his old age, or perhaps he had returned to Jerusalem. The best guess we can make about the *recipients would be that they were members of Jewish-Christian churches in Syria*, which would have been a likely place for the type of heresy that the letter combats. Still, these locations remain little more than guesses.<sup>1</sup>”

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<sup>1</sup> Elwell, W. A., & Beitzel, B. J., “Jude, Letter Of,” In *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, vol. 2, p. 1240, 1988.

(Jude 1:3) and the recipients have personally heard the apostles (who may have died already, v 17), the date is *probably between AD 60 and 100*.

Presumably, Jude traveled (with his wife and family) to promote the faith (1 Cor 9:5). Throughout his travels, he may have established some churches—or, at least, he probably taught at various local churches. It may be that he heard of false teachers infiltrating these churches and was prompted to write them this epistle.

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*The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* proposes, “**Date**, considerable discussion, “but many consider a date relatively late in the 1st century to be probable . . . Both **the identity of the author and the Jewishness of his letter** suggest that the *recipients would probably be Jewish Christians*. On the other hand, although antinomianism was not unknown in 1st-century Judaism, the antinomian teaching of the opponents points most plausibly to a gentile environment (as with the antinomian problems in Paul’s Corinth and in the churches of the book of Revelation). Perhaps we should think of a predominantly, but not exclusively, Jewish-Christian community in a gentile environment.”<sup>3</sup>

## The Text

<sup>1</sup> *Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James, To those who are called, beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ:*

<sup>2</sup> *May mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you.*

<sup>3</sup> *Beloved, being very eager to write to you of our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.*

<sup>4</sup> *For admission has been secretly gained by some who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly persons who pervert the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.*

<sup>5</sup> *Now I desire to remind you, though you were once for all fully informed, that he who saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe. <sup>6</sup> And the angels that did not keep their own position but left their proper dwelling have been kept by him in eternal chains in the nether gloom until the judgment of the great day; <sup>7</sup> just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise acted immorally and indulged in unnatural lust, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.*

<sup>8</sup> *Yet in like manner these men in their dreamings defile the flesh, reject authority, and revile the glorious ones. <sup>9</sup> But when the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, disputed about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a reviling judgment upon him, but said, “The Lord rebuke you.” <sup>10</sup> But these men revile whatever they do not understand, and by those things that they know by instinct as irrational animals do, they are destroyed. <sup>11</sup> Woe to them! For they walk in the way of Cain, and abandon themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam’s error, and perish in Korah’s rebellion. <sup>12</sup> These are blemishes on your love feasts, as they boldly carouse together, looking after themselves; waterless clouds, carried along by winds; fruitless trees in late autumn, twice dead, uprooted; <sup>13</sup> wild waves of the sea, casting up the foam*

<sup>2</sup> Elwell, W. A., & Comfort, P. W., “Jude,” *Tyndale Bible Dictionary*, p. 755, 2001.

<sup>3</sup> Bauckham, R., “Jude, Epistle of,” *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, vol. 3, p. 1102, 1992.

of their own shame; wandering stars for whom the nether gloom of darkness has been reserved for ever.

<sup>14</sup> It was of these also that **Enoch in the seventh generation from Adam prophesied, saying, “Behold, the Lord came with his holy myriads, <sup>15</sup> to execute judgment on all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their deeds of ungodliness which they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.”** <sup>16</sup> These are grumblers, malcontents, following their own passions, loud-mouthed boasters, flattering people to gain advantage.

<sup>17</sup> But you must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; <sup>18</sup> they said to you, “In the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions.” <sup>19</sup> It is these who set up divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit. <sup>20</sup> But you, beloved, build yourselves up on your most holy faith; pray in the Holy Spirit; <sup>21</sup> keep yourselves in the love of God; wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. <sup>22</sup> And convince some, who doubt; <sup>23</sup> save some, by snatching them out of the fire; on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.

<sup>24</sup> Now to him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you without blemish before the presence of his glory with rejoicing, <sup>25</sup> to the only God, our Savior through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.”

## Comments from the text

**First, Jude 1.** In a leading introduction, “**Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James, To those who are called ...**” would set the scene for a powerful Jewish historical-theological journey!

The fact that the writer claims to be *the brother of James* and consequently *the brother of Jesus* certainly added interest to this brief, but theologically loaded epistle!

However the “Jewish” resources James repeatedly cites in this epistle would have a ready acceptance among his Jewish recipients. Every religiously informed Jew would recognize the special impact the short expression “*those who are called...*” would have! This special emphasis on the fact that Israel was a *special divinely chosen, called, and led people was not a simple historical fact, but a loaded theological principle!*

The Jewish Christians were still in an *uncertain era of their special journey, a “pilgrimage” punctuated by trials, persecution, and oppression.* James knew that his readers needed to be reminded of their divine place in YHWH’s eternal purpose.

In their “strategic history,” YHWH had led them from the tragedy of Eden through Noah’s flood to Abraham and Egypt. Then through his *chosen and called* leader, Moses, after a 400 year hiatus of slavery, YHWH had delivered them from Egypt through the Red Sea into the wilderness of Canaan and a vision of His promised kingdom, with judges, kings, and prophets, ultimately to the *new Eden, Jesus Christ and YHWH’s new kingdom.*

All of this history would be recalled and projected onto Jude’s “patriotic” Jewish recipients mind’s through the mention of a brief expression, “***those who are called!***”

**Second, Jude 3.** Jude’s words “*being eager to write to you of our common salvation ...*” would have reminded his Jewish Christian recipients of a “universal, global” theological view; their salvation was not a particular *national salvation*, but a *universal, common, global salvation* available in Christ, *for all nations!* Although the Jews took consolation that they were of a divine calling, Jude surreptitiously mentioned that YHWH had through Abraham *also included*

*others* in his promises, Gen 12, 15, 17. Paul had already explained to both the Jews and Greeks, Gal 3:16-28, that the Abrahamic calling and promise included *other heirs of Abraham*, the Greeks,

Jude clarified this with the expression that the salvation, promised in Abraham was “*the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints*”! The Greek τῆ ἅπαξ carries the sense of *the once only delivered to the saints, not twice, only once!*

There was *not one salvation delivered for the Jews and then later another salvation for the Gentiles!* Th *once delivered salvation was delivered once for both Jew and Gentile.*

**Third, Jude 4.** Those who had rejected God’s salvation in the past were designated for the condemnation the ungodly sinners. This would include all Jews who in the past had rejected YHWH’s salvation, but also those who in the present rejected YHWH’s salvation in the Messiah, Jesus ... “*some who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly persons who pervert the grace of our God ...*”

**Fourth, Jude 5.** “*Now I desire to remind you, though you were once for all fully informed, that he who saved a people out of the land of Egypt ...*” You had as Israel been fully informed of YHWH’s salvation had rejected the promised land YHWH had prepared for you, citing Cain, Balaam, and Korah, part of their history which every Jew knew well! A reminder not to do the same as the past generation had done, rejecting YHWH’s history of redemption.

**Fifth, Jude 8.** *Jude leaves Israel’s traditional religious history and digs into their past mystical religious history and literature*, even introducing the mythical literature of angels being judged and condemned to a place prepared for fallen angels! In the next few sentences Jude includes literature attributed to Enoch, the hero of their past, Gen 5:24. The books of Enoch had for decades, possibly centuries, been treasured by the Jews alongside of their “Torah, Old Testament.”

Christians today are not familiar with much of the Jewish Apocryphal<sup>4</sup> tradition, but the Apocrypha was part of Israel’s religious framework. Obviously, both Jude and Peter knew that the Jews knew of 1 Enoch and their other religious writings. So Jude refers to the condemnation of disobedient angels which Peter also cites, 2 Pet 2:1ff and 2 Pet 2:8 ff. “... *the angels that did not keep their own position but left their proper dwelling have been kept by him in eternal chains in the nether gloom until the judgment of the great day ...*” If God judges and condemns angels who neglect and disobey his salvation, what will the future of Christians be who do so! Heb 2:3, “*Therefore we must pay the closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. <sup>2</sup> For if the message declared by angels was valid and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, <sup>3</sup> how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard him.*”

**Sixth, Jude 8 -11.** It is apparent that Jude’s next comment, those “... *reject authority, and revile the glorious ones.*”<sup>9</sup> *But when the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, disputed about the body of Moses ...*” refers to some of the Jews favorite *apocryphal* texts like the *Assumption of Moses*. The “*the glorious ones*” of their past were probably *Moses and the prophets, or even angels*, who had warned Israel not to corrupt or reject YHWH’s instructions regarding salvation! Rejecting Jesus as the Messiah would be a prime case of rejecting YHWH’s prophets and “*watchers,*” Dan 4:13, 17, Psalm 91, *et al.*

**“For they walk in the way of Cain, and abandon themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam’s error, and perish in Korah’s rebellion.**

<sup>4</sup> Cf. the article Apocrypha in the resources under my website *Biblical Study Resources*.

Cain's problem we know, but the Jews had a serious negative tradition surrounding Caan. He was not a model of faithfulness to YHWH's salvation. Balaam and Korah were false prophets. Balaam<sup>5</sup>, a non-Israelite Moabite, and Korah<sup>6</sup>, a Levite priest mentioned in the book of Numbers, was most famously remembered for leading a rebellion against Moses and Aaron during Israel's wilderness journey. "*These are blemishes on your love feasts ...*" The *love feast* most likely referred to the celebration of the Lord's Supper. What that meant is difficult to understand, other than such narratives and behavior of unfaithfulness were reminders of faithless disobedience.

This narrative was intended as a warning to Jude's Jewish recipients to *maintain the faith delivered one time only to the saints*, Jude 3.

**Seventh, Jude 14.** Enoch's long book/writings, over 50 chapters, extending over 300 years of writing by different authors, was a powerful religious moving picture of warnings against unfaithfulness. "*It was of these also that Enoch in the seventh generation from Adam prophesied, saying, "Behold, the Lord came with his holy myriads,<sup>15</sup> to execute judgment on all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their deeds of ungodliness which they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against him ..."*"

**Eighth, Jude 17-23.** Encouragement to *hold to, and strengthen the faith*, once and for all delivered to the Saints, Jude 3, *strengthened by the Holy Spirit*, and the *grace and mercy of Jesus Christ*.

**Ninth, Jude 24-25.** A benedictory prayer *giving praise and honor to Jesus*, "<sup>24</sup> *Now to him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you without blemish before the presence of his glory with rejoicing,<sup>25</sup> to the only God, our Savior through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.*"

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<sup>5</sup> "Balaam, son of Beor, a Moabite, was a non-Israelite prophet and diviner who lived in the region of northern Syria. According to Numbers 22–24 he was hired by King Balak of Moab to curse Israel, but instead he blessed the Israelites, as dictated by God. Subsequently, the plan to entice the Israelites into idol worship and sexual immorality is attributed to him." Wikipedia.

<sup>6</sup> Korah, was a Levite mentioned in Numbers 16:1–40, is most famously remembered for *leading a rebellion against Moses and Aaron during Israel's wilderness journey*.