

JUDE ARGUMENT

Introductory Matters¹

Authorship

The name Jude is derived either from Judas or Judah, which means “praise.” The name was popular in New Testament times since Judas Maccabeus successfully led the Jews against the Syrians in the Maccabean revolt (160 B.C.). Thus, the New Testament refers to eight persons each bearing the name Jude.² First, there are the sons of the patriarch Jacob (Matt 1:2-3; Luke 3:33). Second, there is the physical ancestor of Christ (Luke 3:30). Third, there is the man who betrayed Christ (Mark 3:19). Fourth, there is Thaddeus. He was one of the original twelve and was either the son or brother of James (Luke 6:16; John 14:22; Acts 1:13). Fifth, there was the Galilean insurrectionist (Acts 5:37). Sixth, there was the native of Damascus (Acts 9:11). Paul visited his house a short time after his conversion. Seventh, there is the emissary who accompanied Paul, Barnabas, and Silas to Antioch (Acts 15:22, 27, 32). This delegation went to Antioch to share with them the decision of the Jerusalem Council. His surname was Barsabbas. It is possible that he was the brother of Joseph Barsabbas, who was one of the two possible candidates to replace Judas (Acts 1:23). Eighth, there is Jude the brother of James (Gal 1:19) and the half brother of Christ (Mark 6:3; Matt 13:55).

¹ Information for this introductory section was compiled from various sources, including Bruce Wilkinson and Kenneth Boa, *Talk Thru the Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1983), 500-03; Robert G. Gromacki, *New Testament Survey* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1974), 385-88; Edward Pentecost, “Jude,” in *Bible Knowledge Commentary*, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Colorado Spring, CO: Chariot Victor, 1983), 917-18; Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *The Messianic Jewish Epistles*, Ariel’s Bible Commentary (Tustin, CA: Ariel, 2005), 427-29; *Nelson’s Complete Book of Charts and Maps*, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1996), 479-81; *Nelson’s Quick Reference Bible Handbook*, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1993), 336-39; Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on Jude,” online: www.soniclight.com, accessed 21 December 2005, 1-3; Stanley Toussaint, “Jude,” (unpublished class notes in BE 307B Hebrews, General Epistles, and Revelation, Dallas Theological Seminary, Spring 2000), 1-3; Daniel Wallace, “Jude: Introduction, Outline, and Argument,” online: www.bible.org, accessed 21 December 2005, 1-7.

² Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3d ed., ed. Frederick William Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 379-80.

By process of elimination, this eighth candidate is the best possibility for the authorship of Jude. The writer describes himself as the servant of Christ and the brother of James. Interestingly, he specifically designates himself as the brother of James rather than the son of James. Thus, he must be the brother of the James who wrote the epistle of James and was the leader in the Jerusalem church (Acts 15:13-21). The writer cannot be the apostle Jude since he certainly would have used this title to add authority to his message. Such authenticity would have certainly been necessary given the severity of Jude's topic. In fact, the writer seems to indicate that he did not consider himself one of the apostles (1, 17-18). The other possibilities seem equally remote since he could have easily identified himself with the name Barsabbas or Damascus.

In addition to this internal evidence, the *external* evidence also points to the eighth candidate as the author of the letter. Such pieces of evidence include Hermas, Polycarp, Theophilus, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Clement of Rome, Barnabas, Epiphanius, the Muratorian Canon, and the Didache. Interestingly, Eusebius categorized Jude with the *antilegomena* or disputed books rather than the spurious books.³

Since Jude the half brother of Christ is the presumed author of the letter, it is helpful to provide some *biographical information* on him. Jude was one of the four half brothers of Christ who were begotten by Joseph and Mary subsequent to Jesus' birth. Thus, Jude was one of the four younger brothers of Jesus who did not believe in Christ's messiahship early on (Mark 3:21; 6:3; John 7:3-8) and yet believed in Him after the resurrection (Acts 1:14). It was probably because of this initial unbelief that Jude describes himself as a mere servant of Christ rather than Christ's brother (1). Jude was eventually converted just as James was (1 Cor 15:7). Apparently, he and his wife had an itinerant preaching ministry (1 Cor 9:5). Although most believe that his death is

³ Henry Clarence Thiessen, *Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), 293.

unknown, it is interesting to note that some observe that “Jude was crucified at Edessa, ancient city of Mesopotamia, about A.D. 72.”⁴

Canonicity

Some were reluctant to grant the book canonical status on account of its brevity, non-canonical citations (9, 14-15), and lack of a renowned author. However, the letter actually enjoys stronger external attestation than that of 2 Peter. Athenagoras and Clement of Alexandria accepted its canonical status. It was also included in the Muratorian Canon. Didymas, Athanasius, Augustine, and Jerome were among the later writers who accepted the book’s canonicity. Early church leaders, such as Tertullian and Origen, also accepted its canonicity. The letter eventually won universal recognition as part of the canon.

Date

How one dates Jude largely depends upon how one handles the apparent interdependence between 2 Peter and Jude. There are numerous parallel citations between these two letters (Jude 4-19; 2 Pet 2:1-3:3).⁵

Jude	2 Peter
3	1:5
4	2:1
6	2:4
7	2:6
8	2:10
9	2:11
10	2:12
11	2:15
12	2:13
12-13	2:17
16	2:18

⁴ John Foxe, *The New Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, rewritten and updated by Harold J. Chadwick ed. (Gainesville, FL: Bridge-Logos, 2001), 8.

⁵ This chart was taken from Fruchtenbaum, *The Messianic Jewish Epistles*, 428-29.

17	3:2
18	3:3

Here is another way of categorizing these similarities.⁶

Jude	2 Peter
4 ungodly men, deny the Lord	2:1
6 angels held in eternal chains until judgment day	2:4
7 Sodom and Gomorrah, judged by eternal fire	2:6
8 they are defiled, reject authority, and slander dignitaries	2:10
9 Michael did not slanderously accuse them	2:11
10 they are brute beasts that speak evil	2:12
11 they followed Balaam's path	2:15
12 <i>They are</i> clouds without water, carried about by the winds	2:17
13 They are wandering stars reserved for eternal darkness	2:17
16 they grumble, complain, lust, and flatter people	2:18
17 this was predicted by the apostles of the Lord	3:2
18 in the last days scoffers are predicted to arrive	3:3

There are three ways to explain these parallels. First, both authors recorded these parallels independent of one another. While such a solution is possible given the fact that the Holy Spirit guided both writers, it is improbable. There are too many similarities. Second, both writers drew from a common source. However, no manuscript evidence has ever been produced testifying to this common source. Third, one writer incorporated the material of another writer. There are two possible ways such incorporation could have happened. First, Peter borrowed from Jude. Under this scenario, Jude wrote before Peter. If 2 Peter was written in A.D. 64-66, then Jude should be dated A.D. 60-65.⁷ Second, Jude borrowed from Peter. Thus, Jude should be dated A.D. 68-80. This second option is preferred.

Five arguments support Petrine priority. First, Jude indicates a sudden change in his writing plans (3). At first he was going to write a treatise on common salvation. He then suddenly changed

⁶ I am indebted to René Lopez for this chart.

⁷ For an enumeration of arguments favoring this view, see Wallace, "Jude: Introduction, Outline, and Argument," 4.

his plans in order to write about apostasy. This change could have been brought about as a result of reading 2 Peter, which warns of coming apostasy. Second, Peter speaks of the future arrival of false teachers (2 Pet 2:1-2; 3:3) while Jude indicates that they had already arrived (Jude 4, 11-12, 17-18). Third, Jude's reference to a prior apostolic warning regarding false teachers (17-18) could refer to the warning previously given by Peter (2 Pet 3:2-4). Fourth, because Jude had a proclivity for citing other sources (9, 14-15), it is likely that he cited 2 Peter as well. Fifth, it is more likely for a prominent apostle to be cited in a letter than for an apostle to cite someone of inferior reputation.

Some date Jude much later than Peter. They argue that Jude 17 indicates that he wrote quite some time after the apostles had taught. But this reference need not indicate that Jude wrote long after the apostles any more than Peter's reference to Paul's writings (2 Pet 3:15) indicates that Peter wrote long after Paul. It is unlikely that Jude wrote in the second century since it would have been more difficult for false teaches to have secretly gained entrance into the more structured church of that era. Also, Jude's failure to mention the death of his brother James as well as the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70 may push the date of the letter before these events transpired.⁸ Moreover, if Foxe is right on the A.D. 72 death of Jude, then the book obviously must have been written before that point in time. In addition, the similarities between 2 Peter and Jude indicate that Jude was written around the same general time period as 2 Peter. All things being considered, a date of A.D. 68-70 for the composition of Jude would not be far from wrong.

Recipients

Although never specifically identified, the letter provides several clues about its audience. First, they are believers. This point becomes obvious from verse 1, which indicates that they are "beloved in God the Father" and "kept for Jesus Christ." Second, they are Jewish. Because of the

⁸ A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976), 197-98.

similarities between 2 Peter and Jude, if it is concluded that the Peter letters were written to Jews,⁹ then it must be concluded that Jude was similarly written to a Jewish audience. Also, the audience exhibits a high degree of familiarity with Jewish literature since both the *Assumption of Moses* and *1 Enoch* are referenced in the letter (9, 14-15). The audience also exhibited a great knowledge of the Old Testament since their understanding of Old Testament people and events is assumed throughout the letter. Jude alludes to yet never fully explains the Exodus (5), the death of numerous Israelites in the wilderness (5), the fallen angels (6), Sodom and Gomorrah (7), Moses' body (9), Cain (11), Balaam (11), Korah (11), Enoch (14), and Adam (14).

Third, they are Jews living outside the land in the Diaspora. This determination can be made on the basis of the similarities between 2 Peter and Jude. If it can be shown that the Peter letters were written to Jews in the Diaspora (1 Pet 1:1),¹⁰ then it is likely that Jude is addressing the same audience. Some have sought to pinpoint the location of the audience even further. However this cannot be done with any real accuracy. For example, some say that the audience was located in Syria. Yet why was Jude's letter not accepted into the Syriac Canon until the sixth century? Others have postulated that the audience was in Egypt. However, none of the apostles wrote to the Egyptians (17). Probably the best guess is that the audience was located in Asia Minor, which was an area that had numerous Jewish communities, had felt Paul's influence, and was overrun by the type of antinomianism spoken of in the letter (Rev 2:14, 20).¹¹ In sum, Jude is addressing Jewish Christians in the Diaspora.

⁹ See my 1 Peter argument for a defense of the Jewish audience of the Peter letters.

¹⁰ See my 1 Peter argument for a defense of this position.

¹¹ Wallace, "Jude: Introduction, Outline, and Argument," 6-7.

Place of Writing

The place of writing cannot be determined with any real certainty. “There is no real internal clue given as to the place of writing.”¹² If Jude was written along with the Peter letters, then it could have been written from Babylon or Rome.¹³ Another possibility is that it was written from inside the land of Canaan.

Jude’s Opponents

Jude seems to focus more on the heretics themselves rather than the heresy they are promoting. He presumes that his audience is already familiar with the heresy. However, the nature of the heresy can still be noted by putting together key pieces of information found in the letter. For example, the heresy involved rebellion against authority (8, 11, 18), a concern for material gain (11, 12, 16), a denial of Christ’s lordship (4), insulting angels (8), yielding to fleshly desires (16, 19), licentiousness (4, 7, 8, 10, 16), flattery (16), infiltration (12), perverted grace (4), divisions (19), elitism (19), fault finding (16), and boasting (16). Because these characteristics sound so similar to what later became second century Gnosticism, Green concludes, “Here, in an undeveloped form, are most of the main characteristics which went to make up later Gnosticism—emphasis on knowledge, which emancipated them from the claims of morality; arrogance towards ‘unenlightened’ church leaders; interest in angelology; divisiveness; lasciviousness.”¹⁴ Gnostic dualism, which saw the spiritual world as evil and the physical world as good, led to both asceticism and license. Jude’s

¹² Ibid., 5.

¹³ See my 1 Peter argument for a defense of the view that 1 Peter was written from Babylon.

¹⁴ Michael Green, *2 Peter and Jude*, rev. ed., Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968; reprint, 1991), 43.

opponents gravitated toward the latter. Thus, Jude's opponents seem to be advocating an early form of what later became second century Gnosticism.¹⁵

Purpose, Message, and Application

The *purpose* of the Book of Jude is to warn that the prophecies spoken of in 2 Peter concerning coming apostasy had become a reality. Originally Jude had desired to write a treatise on Soteriology (3a). He wanted to explain how Jewish believers enjoyed a common salvation with Gentiles (Acts 10–11; 15). However, because false teachers had invaded the church and had begun attacking the doctrines of grace, holiness, and Christ's Lordship, Jude instead opted to write a letter warning of this apostasy and exhorting believers to contend for the faith and persevere in the midst of such apostasy (3b-4). The *message* of Jude is to insulate believers from the effects of apostasy by identifying and condemning the advocates of incipient Gnosticism within the church and to exhort believers to defend themselves in the midst of apostasy by contending for, growing in, and standing firm in the faith. Pentecost nicely summarizes the book's *applicational* value when he notes:

The book is a solemn warning to Christians everywhere, since all are subject to the same doctrinal and practical errors. Though its theme regarding apostasy was specifically directed to first-century Jewish Christians, its message is applicable to all Christians. All believers need to avoid the pitfalls of denying Christ's lordship, promiscuously following the fleshly desires, rejecting authority, being divisive, and living for self.¹⁶

Sub Purposes

In addition to the above-described overarching purpose, Jude advocated numerous sub purposes in his letter. First, he wanted to urge readers to contend for the faith (3). Second, he wanted to warn his readers about the apostates (4). Third, he wanted to furnish the characteristics of these apostates. Fourth, Jude predicted their imminent judgment (5-16). Fifth, he wanted to remind his

¹⁵ Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, rev. ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1990), 911.

¹⁶ Pentecost, "Jude," 918.

readers of previous warnings concerning the arrival of apostasy (17-19). Sixth, he wanted to show believers how they could grow even in the midst of apostasy (20-23). Seventh, he wanted to assure believers of God's continued protection even in the midst of the apostasy (24-25).

Genre

Although the dominant genre of the letter is epistolary, most would categorize it further as an "epistolary sermon." In other words, it is a homily. The material found within the letter would have been a sermon if Jude had addressed his audience directly. However, geographic considerations made this impossible. Thus, Jude's sermon took the form of an epistle. In this regard, the letter seems to be similar to James, Hebrews, and 1 John.

Structure

The letter is comprised of four different sections. The first section records the demand for the letter or why it was written (1-4). The second section is devoted to a description of false teachers (5-16). The third section explains to believers how they can defend themselves against false teachers (17-23). The fourth section is a doxology (24-25). The first two sections are an anatomy of the apostasy. They provide the reason for contending for the faith. The last two sections give the antidote for apostasy. They explain to readers how to contend for the faith.

Unique Characteristics

The epistle of Jude boasts several outstanding characteristics. First, it cites non-canonical literature more than any other New Testament writer.¹⁷ For example, it alludes to the *Assumption of*

¹⁷ Much of Jude's phraseology can be found in 1 *Enoch*. Examples include references to denial of Christ (Jude 4; 1 *Enoch* 48:10-11), angelic sin (Jude 6; 1 *Enoch* 12:4-7; 15:3), divine judgment upon the angels (Jude 6; 1 *Enoch* 6:21; 10:4-51; 13:1), wandering stars (Jude 9; 1 *Enoch* 18:14-16), seventh from Adam (Jude 14; 1 *Enoch* 60:8), quotation of Enoch's prophecy (Jude 14; 1 *Enoch* 1:9), and harsh words spoken against the Lord (Jude 15; 1 *Enoch* 5:4;

Moses (9).¹⁸ It also refers to *1 Enoch* 1:9; 5:4 (14-15).¹⁹ Jude is not alone in this practice. Paul made reference to Arastus (Acts 17:28), Epimendes (Titus 1:12), and Menander (1 Cor 15:33). Paul also referred to *Jannes and Jambres*, which are names found only in extra biblical literature (2 Tim 3:8). However, it must be remembered that a citation of non-canonical material should not be misconstrued as a blanket endorsement of everything recorded in that non-canonical source. By way of analogy, citing Thomas Jefferson does not automatically mean that the person doing the citing agrees with everything that Thomas Jefferson ever said. These non-canonical citations simply mean that the biblical writer under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit happened to cite an item in an extra biblical source because that item happened to be true.

Second, Jude fulfills the prophecies spoken of in 2 Peter. Third, the literary dependence of Jude upon 2 Peter makes the work unique. Both books must be studied together. Fourth, the book uses numerous examples of Old Testament apostasy. Fifth, the book is a “scorching” exposé on false teachers. In fact, with the exception of the salutation (1-2) and doxology (24-25), the entire book is dedicated to this subject. Although Paul dealt extensively with this subject, none of his letters are

27:2). Some of Jude’s phraseology can be found in the *Assumption of Moses*. Examples include the dispute over Moses’ body (Jude 9) as well as the references to boasting and flattering (Jude 16, *Assumption of Moses* 5:5; 7:9).

¹⁸ The *Assumption of Moses* is a retelling of Deuteronomy 31–34, which records Moses’ farewell address to Joshua before entering the Promised Land. It also records the history of the nation from the entrance of the land to the end of the age. The only extant copy that we possess of the *Assumption of Moses* was discovered in 1861. It is a Latin translation from the Greek that is partially incomplete, corrupt, and illegible. It does not even contain the section supposedly cited by Jude. Many still believe that Jude was citing from the *Assumption of Moses* on the testimony of church fathers Didymas, Clement, and Origen. However, because the copy we possess breaks off before the death of Moses, there is no way to validate the opinion of these church fathers on this matter. Perhaps Jude knew of the dispute over Moses’ body from some other source. See J. Carl Laney, *Answers to Tough Questions: A Survey of Problem Passages and Issues from Every Book of the Bible* (Kregel: Grand Rapids, 1997), 330-31.

¹⁹ The Book of *Enoch* fills in information about the mysterious biblical figure Enoch (Gen 5:18-24). Its period of compilation started roughly three centuries before Christ and lasted until the medieval period. The book records “what was revealed to Enoch concerning the mysteries of the universe, the future of the world, and the course of human history.” *Ibid.*, 331. However, it is debatable whether Jude was directly quoting from Enoch. Perhaps there was an oral tradition accurately representing something that the biblical Enoch said that was later captured in the Book of *Enoch*. Under this scenario, both the writer of the Book of *Enoch* and Jude were alluding to this oral tradition. Also, because the compilation of the Book of *Enoch* lasted until the medieval period, it is unclear whether Jude had access to the part he supposedly cited. Given the length of this compilation period, is it also not possible that the Book of *Enoch* was quoting Jude?

exclusively dedicated to dealing with it. Sixth, Jude also uses triads more than any other New Testament writer.

- v 1, “Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ, a brother of James”
- v 1, “called ... loved ... kept”
- v 2, “mercy, peace, and love”
- v 4, “godless ... change the grace of God ... and deny Jesus Christ”
- vv 5-7, “Israelites in the wilderness, angels who fell, Sodom and Gomorrah”
- v 6, “did not keep ... he has kept ... bound”
- v 8, “pollute ... reject ... slander”
- v 11, “Cain, Balaam, Korah
- v 12, “without fruit ... uprooted, twice dead”
- v 15, “ungodly ... ungodly acts ... in the ungodly way”
- v 16, “grumblers ... faultfinders ... following their own evil desires”
- v 19, “divide you ... follow mere natural instincts ... do not have the Spirit.”
- vv 20-21, “build yourselves up ... pray in the Holy Spirit ... keep yourselves in God’s love”
- vv 20-21, “the Holy Spirit ... God (the Father) ... our Lord Jesus Christ”
- vv 22-23, “Be merciful ... snatch others ... show mercy mixed with fear”
- v 25, “God, Savior, Lord”
- v 25, “before all ages, now and forevermore”

Thus, it is fitting that the book has three main divisions (1-4, 5-16, 17-24), and contains the words “keep” (1, 21, 24), “these men” (12, 16, 19), and “dear friends (3, 17, 20) three times each.

Seventh, the book uses numerous metaphors from nature. Eighth, it uses numerous figures of speech. Ninth, it has a succinct style. Tenth, it describes false teachers with “descriptive and stinging” words. Eleventh, the letter contains an unusually large number of *hapax legomena* (words used only once in the entire New Testament). The book has 14 *hapax legomena*. Moreover there are three other terms appearing only in Jude and 2 Peter.²⁰

Jude

- 3 epagwni/zesqai – “to struggle for, to contend”
- 4 pareise/dusan – “to sneak in secretly, or slip in along side of”
- 7 ekporneu&sasai – “to commit sexual sin or indulge in immorality”

²⁰ Adapted from Roy B. Zuck, *The Epistle of Jude*, Dallas Theological Seminary Class Notes (Dallas, TX: unpublished, no date), 4.

7	dei=gma	– “sample or example”
7	upe/xousai	– “to under go suffering”
10	fusikw~j	– “naturally, by instinct”
12	spila&dej	– “stain, spots, blemishes or hidden rocks”
12	fqinopwrina_	– “in late autumn, belonging to it”
13	e0pafri/zonta	– “to foam up”
13	planh~tai	– “wanderer”
16	goggustai\	– “grumblers”
16	memyi/moiroi	– “complainers”
19	apodiori/zontej	– “to cause divisions”
24	aptai/stouj	– “free from stumbling”

Three other terms appear only in Jude and in 2 Peter

Jude		2 Peter
12	suneuwxou&menoi	– “to eat together” 2:13
16	upe/rogka	– “boastful, puffed up and arrogant” 2:18
18	empai/kthj	– “scoffers or mockers” 3:3

Outline

- I. Demand for the letter (1-4)
 - A. Greeting (1-2)
 1. Author: Jude, brother of James (1a)
 2. Recipients: called, loved, kept (1b)
 3. Salutation: mercy, peace, love (2)
 - B. Occasion for the letter (3-4)
 1. Old content: common salvation (3a)
 2. New content: contend for the faith (3b)
 3. Need: advent of the apostates (4)
 - a) Secretive (4a)
 - b) Godless (4b)
 - c) Licentious (4c)
 - d) Heretical (4d)
- II. Description of false teachers (5-16)
 - A. Denunciation of apostates (5-7)
 1. Lessons from history: the Pentateuch (5-7a)
 - a) Jews: Israel’s unbelief (5)
 - b) Angels: angelic rebellion (6)
 - c) Gentiles: Sodom and Gomorrah's immorality (7a)
 2. Present punishment of apostates (7b)
 - B. Description of apostates (8-13)
 1. Angelic realm (8-10)
 - a) Defile flesh: immorality (8a)

- b) Reject authority: rebellion (8b)
- c) Revile angelic beings: unbelief (8c-10)
 - i) Their own slander of the Angels (8c)
 - ii) Michael's refusal to slander Satan (9)
 - iii) Their lack of understanding (10)
- 2. Human realm (11)
 - a) Cain: opposed to God's basic principles (11a)
 - b) Balaam: self serving (11b)
 - c) Korah: rebellious (11c)
- 3. Natural realm: metaphors from nature depicting apostates' character (12-13)
 - a) Hidden reefs at love feasts: unsuspectingly harmful (12a)
 - b) Shepherds feeding themselves: selfish (12b)
 - c) Clouds without rain: unable to deliver what is promised (12c)
 - d) Trees without fruit: dead (12d)
 - e) Wild waves: lack of edification (13a)
 - f) Wandering stars: unstable (13b)
- C. Doom of apostates (14-16)
 - 1. Prophesied by Enoch (14-15)
 - a) Source: Enoch (14)
 - b) Reasons for coming judgment (15)
 - i) Sinful acts (15a)
 - ii) Sinful words (15b)
 - 2. Prophesied by Jude: Reasons for coming judgment (16)
 - a) Grumblers (16a)
 - b) Fault finders (16b)
 - c) Lustful (16c)
 - d) Arrogant (16d)
 - e) Flatterers (16e)
- III. Defense against apostasy: duties of believers in the midst of apostasy (17-23)
 - A. To remember the scriptural warnings of coming apostasy (17-19)
 - 1. Apostolic prophecy (17-18)
 - 2. How apostates fulfill apostolic warnings (19)
 - a) Divisive (19a)
 - b) Unscriptural (19b)
 - c) Devoid of the Holy Spirit (19c)
 - B. To themselves (20-21)
 - 1. Build yourself up on your faith (20a)
 - 2. Trinitarian example of building one's self (20b-21)
 - a) Holy Spirit: pray of the Spirit (20b)
 - b) Father: keep yourself in God's love (21a)
 - c) Son: await Christ (21b)
 - C. To others (22-23)
 - 1. To believers: have mercy on doubters (22)
 - 2. To believers under discipline or unbelievers (23)
 - a) Save some by snatching them out of the fire (23a)
 - b) Have mercy on some with fear (23b)

IV. Doxology: Jude praises God (24-25)

- A. Cause for Jude's praise to God: election (24)
 - 1. God will preserve the believer despite the apostasy (24a)
 - 2. God will present the believer in glory (24b)
- B. Content of Jude's praise (25)

Argument

The first section of the book explains the demand for the letter (1-4). In other words, it explains why Jude wrote the letter. In the greeting section (1-2), Jude identifies himself as the letter's author (1a). He refers to himself as the brother of James. Because of the severity of his message and because he was not one of the original twelve apostles, it was necessary for Jude to explain his connection with Christ in order for his message to be accepted. Thus, Jude explains that he has the authority necessary to speak since he is one of Christ's brothers.

He also explains that his readers are "called, beloved, and kept" by God (1b). Despite the reality of apostasy, they are eternally secure. Thus, their election will prevent them from being permanently swept away. They can also remain faithful to God in their practical lives as they learn to draw upon God's resources to sustain them. Jude will later explain how they can draw upon divine resources in order to keep their daily lives doctrinally pure in the midst of apostasy (17-23). Jude next extends a typical salutation of "mercy, peace, and love" (2). This threefold blessing shows them their riches in God. An awareness of these riches is needed since Jude's readers face the awesome task of resisting the encroachments of apostasy. They will only be successful in this endeavor if they are aware of these divine resources.

Jude explains his motivation for writing the letter (3-4). Initially, he desired to write a treatise on the common salvation that his Jewish audience enjoyed with Gentile believers (3a). Because his audience was primarily Jewish, they may have gotten the mistaken idea that they were a separate or second-class or superior group within Christ's body. Jude originally wanted to rectify

this idea by explaining that both Jews and Gentiles are saved the same way (Acts 10–11; 15) and have equal standing in Christ’s church (Eph 2). Instead, because of the gravity of the immediate situation, Jude opted to write a letter on the reality of apostasy. Jude had become aware of the invasion of false teachers. Perhaps he became aware of this by reading 2 Peter. At any rate, Jude recognized the severity of the situation and instead wrote a letter exhorting his audience to contend for the faith in the midst of the apostasy (3b). Through the use of the phrase “the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” Jude defines the limits of orthodoxy. A false teacher is recognizable because he contradicts, adds, or subtracts from what God has already revealed (Deut 4:32; 12:32; 13:1-5; Prov 30:6; Acts 17:11; 1 Thess 5:21; 2 Pet 3:16; Rev 2:2; 22:18-19).²¹

Jude gives further confirmation of the need for the letter in verse 4. He explains that a treatment on apostasy is necessary because false teachers have secretly interjected themselves into Christ’s body, the church (4a). From this clandestine position, they have introduced godlessness (4b), licentiousness (4c), and even heretical ideas that subtract from the person and work of Christ (4d). Given these dire circumstances a warning against apostasy seems appropriate. Thus, the shift in focus in Jude’s writing ministry is justified.

Now that Jude has explained the demand for the letter (1-4), he moves on to describe the apostates (5-16). Such a description is necessary since it will give his readers the ability to recognize and thus deal with apostasy in their midst. Jude begins (5-7) and ends (14-16) this section describing the apostates with predictions of their ultimate downfall. Jude wants his readers to understand that these apostates will eventually experience God’s judgment. Thus, if his readers align themselves with their teachings, they will find themselves at odds with God’s purposes.

²¹ Although the Book of Revelation had not yet been written, it really does not add much new revelation but simply organizes existing truths into a chronological framework. Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Footsteps of the Messiah*, rev ed. (Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries, 2003), 9.

In the first section depicting the eventual downfall of false teachers (5-7), Jude surfaces three historical examples from the Pentateuch. The first example involves Jews. The second example involves angels. The third example involves Gentiles. Thus, God's judgment against rebellion is universal and knows no cultural, national, or anthropological distinctions. Neither will God show mercy to the apostates of Jude's day. If God judged the unbelieving Jews when they came out of Egypt (5; Num 14), and He judged the angels when they sinned in Noah's day (6; 2 Pet 2:4-5; Gen 6:1-4), and He judged the wicked Sodomites (7a; Gen 18-19), He will certainly execute judgment upon the current generation of apostates. In fact, the existence of two present tense verbs at the end of verse 7 indicates that past apostates are undergoing the present judgment of God. Thus, Jude's audience can be assured that God will also bring into judgment the present generation of apostates.²²

Now that Jude has used history to show his audience that any alignment with false teachers will put them on a collision course with God's purposes (5-7), he furnishes them with a three-fold description of the apostates that he is condemning (8-13). This description will help them recognize the presence of an apostate so they can take disciplinary measures against him. Jude uses examples from the angelic (8-10), human (11), and natural realms to describe these apostates (12-13). Like the fallen angels that cohabitated with human women in Noah's day (6),²³ the present apostates similarly indulge the flesh (8a) and reject divine authority (8b). They even go so far in their rejection of authority to slander celestial beings (8c).²⁴ This is something not even Michael the

²² The reference to "eternal fire" at the end of verse 7 lays to rest the unscriptural idea of annihilationism (Rev 14:11).

²³ For a defense of this interpretation, see Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Messianic Christology* (Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries, 1998), 118-22.

²⁴ In what sense were they slandering celestial beings? Several options have been proposed: (1) They were blaspheming church leaders. (2) They were speaking contemptuously of demonic powers. (3) They were blaspheming good angels, who in Gnostic teachings created the world. (4) They were blaspheming angels who were the givers of the

archangel would dare to do (9).²⁵ Their participation in such a heinous activity shows their spiritual insensitivity (10). In sum, Jude uses the angelic realm to illustrate the immorality and rebellion of the apostates of his own day.

Jude offers a further description of the apostates by appealing to the human realm (11). Here, he again uses three examples from the Pentateuch of religious men who were serving themselves rather than God. The fact that each of these three was religious demonstrates that the apostates of Jude's day were operating from places of influence within the church (4a). The first example is Cain who was characterized by hatred of God's method of salvation (11a; Gen 4:1-15; Heb 11:4; 1 John 3:12). The second example is Balaam who was characterized by placing his desire for financial gain above his calling as a prophet (11b; Num 22-24). The third example is Korah who was characterized by rebellion against divine authority (11c; Num 16). Thus, Jude uses these examples from the human realm to describe the apostates of his own day as religious yet opposed to God's basic principles, self serving, and rebellious.

Jude offers a further description of the apostates by drawing examples from nature (12-13). These six metaphors from nature each depict a different aspect of the apostates' corrupt character. First, his depiction of them as "hidden reefs" shows them to be harmful (12a). Just as a hidden reef can inflict great damage upon an unsuspecting sea vessel, the clandestine apostates can similarly inflict grave spiritual damage upon Jude's unsuspecting audience. Second, his characterization of them as "shepherds feeding themselves" (12b) shows their propensity to promote their own interests ahead of the interests of the flock (Ezek 34). Third, his depiction of them as "clouds without rain"

Mosaic Law and guardians of the world. (5) They had contempt for angels because of their own alleged spiritual superiority. This final view seems preferable. I am indebted to René Lopez for this enumeration of options.

²⁵ Although the reference to the dispute over Moses' body is likely found in the *Assumption of Moses*, the quotation in verse 9 is found in Zechariah 3:2.

(12c) shows the false expectations they create. Thus, they are unable to deliver what they promise. While the license that they promote promises spiritual maturity, it only delivers bondage.

Fourth, the fact that he calls them “trees without fruit” (12d) testifies to the death and lack of spiritual vitality in their lives and doctrines. Fifth, he characterizes them as “wild waves” (13a). Just as these waves only produce froth on the seashore, the apostates are not able to produce anything eternal or edifying. Sixth, his depiction of them as “wandering stars” (13b) demonstrates their inherent instability. These six metaphors from nature all serve to point out the corrupt character of Jude’s opponents. In sum, as Jude’s audience grasped his illustrations from the angelic, human, and natural realms, they would better be able to recognize the false teachers in their midst. Such recognition would allow them to avoid their teachings and even take corrective action against them.

Just as Jude opened this section describing the apostates (5-16) with a warning of their ultimate destruction (5-7), he similarly closes this section with a further warning of the apostates’ eventual downfall (14-16). Jude again wants his readers to understand that if they align themselves with the doctrines of the apostates, then they simultaneously put themselves on a path that is opposed to God’s purposes. Thus, Jude recalls the words of Enoch (14) who predicted that the Lord would return and impose judgment upon all who lived lives in opposition to God.²⁶ At that time, people will be condemned not only for their sinful actions taken against God (15a) but also for their sinful words spoken against Him (15b). Such judgment will be rightly imposed upon the false teachers since their lives (16) are characterized by sinful actions (lust and arrogance) and sinful words (grumblers, fault finders, flatterers). Thus, if Jude’s readers entangle themselves with the apostates, they are entangling themselves with those whose words and actions oppose God. Such an alliance would place Jude’s readers against God’s purposes in history.

²⁶ If these words are really from Enoch (see previous discussion under “Unique Characteristics”), then it is likely that Enoch knew that the flood was coming and thus used the flood as a foreview of the judgment that would come at the end of time. Toussaint, “Jude,” 2.

Beginning in verse 17, Jude moves away from merely describing and denouncing false teachers (5-16). Instead he moves toward instructing his audience regarding how they can fortify themselves against the false teachers' deleterious influence (17-23). In other words, at this point in his letter, Jude has moved away from simply giving the anatomy of the apostasy (5-16) and instead moved toward providing an antidote for the apostasy (17-23). The words "but you beloved ought to" (17) signal this important transition. In this important section, Jude admonishes believers to do *three* things that will sustain them in the midst of the apostasy.

First, believers must remember the scriptural warnings of coming apostasy (17-19). The present apostasy should not take believers off guard since the apostles had already warned them of its soon arrival (17-18). Indeed, apostolic writings are filled with such warnings (Acts 20:28-30; 1 Tim 4:1-5; 2 Tim 3:1-9; 2 Pet 3:2-4). Jude admonishes his readers to remember these predictions so that they will not be overwhelmed or unduly dismayed by the apostasy's arrival. Jude goes on to give some of the characteristics of the present apostates in an attempt to show how they are the fulfillment of these apostolic predictions. The present apostates fulfill the warnings of the apostles through their divisiveness, worldliness, and lack of spirituality (19).

Second, believers must build themselves up in spiritual truth (20-21). How do believers do this? The main verb in these verses is *threw*. It is found in the phrase "keep yourselves in the love of God." The remaining verbs are attendant participles, which describe how one keeps himself in God's love.²⁷ Believers keep themselves in God's love by building themselves up in the faith (20a), praying under the guidance of the Spirit (20b), and awaiting Christ's return (21b). If believers do these three things, they will keep themselves in God's love. Consequently, they will build

²⁷ Toussaint, "Jude," 2. "The love of God" may refer to the believer's love for God rather than God's love for the believer since all of the attendant participles speak of what the believer must do rather than what God must do.

themselves up in Christ and thus establish the internal fortitude necessary to not be swayed by the apostasy.

Third, believers have a responsibility to others in the midst of the apostasy. As believers build themselves up in their own faith, they will have the strength necessary to help others. They are to have mercy on Christian doubters that have been victimized by the doctrines of the apostates (22). They also have a responsibility to unbelievers and/or believers who are under discipline (23). Jude wants his audience to rescue the deceived thus sparing them from future judgment (23a). He also wants his audience to show mercy upon those being defiled by the apostates. At the same time the rescuer should be cautious so that he is not contaminated by the same sin (23b). As they contend for the faith, Jude does not want his audience to neglect these various group.

Jude closes the letter with a doxology (24-25). Here, he praises God for the believer's election (24). Thus, he knows that God will preserve (24a) and bring the believer to glory (24b) despite the existence of the apostasy.²⁸ This realization causes him to explode into praise to God (25). Jude glorifies the one true God because only He can preserve the believer in the midst of apostasy.

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²⁸ The word *aptaistos* that is translated "without stumbling" in verse 24 probably refers to drifting into apostasy. This definition fits well with the argument of the book.

²⁹ Bigg is an example of a critical commentary. Plummer is an example of an exegetical commentary. Ironside and MacArthur are examples of expositional commentaries. Wiersbe and McGee are examples of devotional commentaries.

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