

Words of Warning and Encouragement from Jesus' Half Brother

A Study of Jude – Study Guide

Authorship of Jude

The name, Jude, is an English form of the Hebrew name, Judas. This was a popular name among the Jews at the time of the early Christian Church in honor of Judas Maccabaeus who led the nation of Israel in a revolt for independence chronicled in the Deuterocanonical Books of 1st and 2nd Maccabees. The most well-known Judas was, of course, Judas Iscariot who was an original Disciple of Jesus who later betrayed him and committed suicide. The author of **Jude** is obviously not that Judas.

Let's start with reading verse 1 of **Jude**. Considering the custom of that time period and culture, what is unusual about how Jude introduces himself and if Jude is the half-brother of Jesus why would he instead identify himself as the brother of James?

Authorship is important because during the first three centuries of the Christian church, the author of a book or epistle gave it credence as to whether it should be considered as part of the Canon of Scripture. The authorship of **Jude** has sparked a lot of controversy. Most authorities believe that the author of **Jude** is one of the sons of Joseph and Mary i.e., a half-brother of Jesus and one of the brothers of James, the leader of the Jerusalem Christian church during the "Apostolic Period". Others believe he was one of the original twelve Disciples, the "other Judas" (not Judas Iscariot). "Liberal Scholars" maintain that Jude was not written in the first century at all and is pseudepigrapha, i.e., that it was written much later under the pseudonym of Jude.

How does the first verse of **Jude** argue against authorship under a pseudonym?

Let's take a look at the family trees of Jesus as well as some of the Apostles to identify the most likely candidates for Judas (Jude), brother of James as well as the identity of James.

Compare **Mark 6:2 – 3** to **Matthew 13:53 – 56**. What do we learn about the Judas (Jude) described here?

Compare **Matthew 10:2 – 4** to **Luke 6:13 – 16**. What do we learn about the Judas (Jude) described in these verses?

Compare **Matthew 27:55 – 56**, **Mark 15:40**, and **John 19:25**. When reading these verses it is important to know that “Alphaeus”, “Cleophas”, and “Clopas” are the same person. All three of these names are derived from the Hebrew, *חלפאי*, and were just different ways of writing and pronouncing the same name. Therefore, what relationships do these verses reveal?

Matthew 27:55 – 56 _____

Mark 15:40 _____

John 19:25 _____

Going on a brief aside (☺), if the sons of Zebedee (the apostles James and John) truly were the cousins of Jesus, how might that give us insights into the following verses.

Luke 2:41 – 45 _____

Matthew 17:1 – 9 _____

Matthew 20:20 – 22 _____

John 21:20 – 24 _____

What do **John 7:1 – 5**, **1 Corinthians 9:5**, **1 Corinthians 15:3 – 8**, **Acts 1:12 – 14**, **Galatians 1:18 – 19**, **Acts 15:12 – 21**, **Galatians 2:8 – 10**, and **James 1:1** imply about the family relationships of Jesus or the importance of those family members in the first century Christian Church throughout the Mediterranean region?

John 7:1 – 5 _____

1 Corinthians 9:5 _____

1 Corinthians 15:3 – 8 _____

Acts 1:12 – 14 _____

Galatians 1:18 – 19 _____

Acts 15:12 – 21 _____

Galatians 2:8 – 10 _____

James 1:1 _____

How does **Acts 12:1 – 3** impact which James is being referred to in **Jude 1**?

Some argue that the author of **James** is the Apostle, James son of Alphaeus and not the half-brother of Jesus. They also argue that James the Apostle (James the Less or James the Younger) was the head of the Jerusalem church. What are the arguments for and against this?

See also **Jude 17 – 18**. How do these verses impact the identity of Jude?

Regarding Jude's authority as a writer of a canonical Book of the Bible, Dr. Geise compares **Jude 1** to **Romans 1:1** and **2 Peter 1** and comments:

...the title "servant" of Jesus Christ designates a man in the NT era called into the holy office of preaching and teaching. He speaks and writes on behalf of Christ, with such authority that his epistle is canonical Scripture, normative for the church. The terminology for this office may be somewhat wider than "apostle", yet is parallel to it...The title is not only one of honor, but especially one of humility...Jude employs

this title as he writes to his audience to signify his divine office of service-authority in the church.

Purpose and Content of Jude

Let's read **Jude 1 – 2**.

We all are (or should be) servants of Christ. What does that imply for us?

What are the theological implications of the second half of verse one of **Jude**?

What comfort is there for you in this part of verse one?

Read verse 2 of **Jude** and note the three-part blessing. How are the blessings mentioned in this verse different from each other and what benefit or comfort does each provide?

“Mercy” _____

“Peace” _____

“Love” _____

Why then do we chase after so many other things that do not give us peace?

Let's read **Jude 3 – 4**.

Do any of your commentaries speculate on who the recipients are of this letter from Jude?

What kind of relationship does Jude appear to have with the recipients and what was Jude's original intent in writing this letter?

What does the latter part of verse 3 imply about the teachings and doctrines of the church?

What does it mean to “change the grace of God into a license for immorality”?

How do you and I do that today? _____

See the handout that compares **2 Peter 2:1 – 2 Peter 3:4** to **Jude 4 – 18**. Much has been made about the similarities between these two sets of passages. It is commonly believed that either Jude drew upon **2 Peter** or the Apostle Peter drew upon **Jude** when they wrote their epistles. The most common belief is the latter, that **Jude** pre-dated **2 Peter**. Another possibility is that both authors drew upon a common source when each wrote their epistle. Borrowing from other writers was quite common in that era of time. We see this sharing of text also in the Synoptic Gospels (**Matthew, Mark, and Luke**). Using this handout as a reference guide, **2 Peter** can help us interpret **Jude** directly using the concept of “Scripture interprets Scripture”.

Read **Jude 4 – 8** and **2 Peter 2:1 – 10a**.

What are the implications that the false teachers have slipped in secretly?

What do we learn about the false teachers from both Epistles?

What is the purpose of recounting the instances of God’s judgment in the Old Testament?

What differences do you see between **Jude** and **2 Peter** in the recounting of the Old Testament examples of God’s judgment?

What do we learn about the evil angels in these passages?

Read **Jude 9 – 10** and compare with **2 Peter 2:10b – 14**?

What does it mean to “**slander celestial beings**” and what is the warning for us? Compare this also to **Zechariah 3:1 – 6**.

What do we learn about the secret infiltrators, and do you see any parallels in our world today either within or external to the Christian church?

Look again at **Jude 9** and compare it to **Deuteronomy 34:1 – 8** and **2 Peter 10b – 11**.

What difference(s) do we see about the death of Moses between **Jude, 2 Peter** and **Deuteronomy**?

Many authorities believe that Jude was relating a story from an apocryphal book called *The Assumption of Moses* that is now lost. (Note: This is not the same book you will find if you “Google” “The Assumption of Moses”). These authorities say that we cannot necessarily believe that there ever was a dispute between the Archangel Michael and Satan over the body of Moses. Knowing this do you now do you think this story is true? Why or why not?

What is the overall point that God is making in **Jude 8 – 10**?

Jude 11 references three Old Testament examples of God’s judgment. Note the correlating verses of **2 Peter 2:15 – 16**. What sin and/or example of judgment do each of these represent or serve and how does it correlate to what Jude is saying?

Genesis 4:8 – 16 – Cain’s judgment _____

Numbers 22:26 – 35 – The story of Balaam and the talking donkey

Numbers 16:1 – 7, 23 – 35 – The story of the rebellion of Korah

What are the metaphors and their meaning in **Jude 12 – 13, 16**? See also **2 Peter 2:17 – 19** for additional metaphors. What do we learn about those who are spreading the heresy from these metaphors and what warnings are there for us in these descriptions?

What do you think is meant by “love feasts” in verse 12?

What are the implications of verse 12 for our celebration of the Lord’s Supper?

What difficulties and responsibilities does this present for our congregations, especially the Pastor and Boards of Elders?

Compare **Jude 14 – 15** with **Genesis 5:18 – 24** and **Hebrews 11:5**. What do we know about Enoch from these verses?

Similar to Jude’s reference to the story in *The Assumption of Moses* apocryphal literature at the time in verse 9, **Jude 14 – 15** is quoting from *1 Enoch*, apocryphal literature at that time. *1 Enoch* was held in high regard during the early NT era and some early Christians included 1 Enoch in their OT Canon. What do your commentaries say, if anything, on whether the portion of 1 Enoch quoted by Jude is the inspired Word of God and what are the implications and ramifications of that question?

Let’s re-read **Jude 14 – 15** along with verse 16. Why does Jude reference Enoch, and what is the overall message in these verses?

Considering all that we have been discussing, what does **Jude 17 – 19** and **2 Peter 3:1 – 4** imply about the thinking of the Church of that day as it relates to End Times and second coming of Christ?

How can we fall into a similar attitude as the “scoffers” in our daily lives?

How does **2 Peter 3:5 – 12** help refute the mockers and also help us to keep a big picture of life?

We now come to the Gospel portion of **Jude** starting with verse 20. Read **Jude 20 – 23**.

Quick review what is the significance of the word, “beloved” (verse 20) to recipients of this letter and to us?

How does “building yourselves up in your most holy faith” relate to the Church?

What does it mean to “pray in the Holy Spirit”? How do we do that?

What does verse 21 mean and look like in actual practice?

Why show mercy on those who doubt (verse 22)?

See verse 23, what responsibilities do we have and with what attitude should we carry them out?

Let’s finish **Jude** by reading **Jude 24 – 25**.

Jude 24 would be a “proof text” for “Once saved always saved” Reformed theology. Compare it to **2 Peter 2:20 – 21**. How do we reconcile these verses and the implied theology.

Jude 25 calls God the Savior, “through Jesus Christ our Lord”. How do we resolve this apparent conflict in our understanding of the Trinity and how does **Jude 25** help us in that understanding?

Dr. Giese points out that Jude’s “*sweeping time element includes eternity past, the present, and future eternity*” and that this “*is the longest such time element referenced in early Christian literature*”. What comfort does that give you?

Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, 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.

Jude 24-25