

An Introduction to Jude

Introduction

a. objectives

1. subject – an introduction to the book of Jude and its view of avoiding false teachings
2. aim – to cause us to watch out for heresy and to persevere in the love of God
3. passage – Jude 4

b. outline

1. The Authorship of Jude
2. The Audience of Jude
3. The Applicability of Jude

c. opening

1. the **reasons** for choosing this book as a new series
 - a. a book I've *never* preached before, and one very different from James
 - b. a book that is short (a single-chapter) to “fill in the time” before starting a larger work
 - c. a book that is *obscure* (**i.e.** rarely getting a hearing in the church today)
 - d. a book that is *very interesting* (**i.e.** having some odd statements to be interpreted)
 - e. a book from *another* half-brother of Jesus (**i.e.** a logical follow-on to James)
2. the **purpose** of an introduction sermon (**this will be similar to James Intro**)
 - a. to establish *details* – to understand the simple details of the letter
 1. **i.e.** who wrote it, when it was written, to whom it was written, why it was accepted, etc.
 - b. to establish *context* – because **“a text without a context is a pretext for a prooftext”**
 1. a **grammatical-historical** approach to Scripture insists that anything taken from the Bible (**i.e.** a word, verse, passage, or whole book) must be taken from the perspective of the *author*
 - a. **i.e.** to make sure we understand *why* the book was written, and what the author intended
 - c. to establish *interest* – to give us an initial desire to enter into it
 1. **i.e.** an opening designed to *transition* into the letter – to establish *excitement* about it
 2. **question:** what will happen during the course of *this letter* (I hesitate to ask) ... ?

I. The Authorship of Jude

Content

a. the author of the letter

1. **note:** verse references in single-chapter books *are not* preceded by a chapter number
2. like most of the epistles of the N.T., this letter *starts by* identifying its author
 - a. the exceptions being **Hebrews** (unknown) and **1-3 John** (with strong manuscript evidence)
3. Jude (unlikely) = an unknown writer with that name or a pseu-donymous writer *using* that name
 - a. but, why would *anyone* choose to write a letter to *believers* using the name of a relatively *insignificant* figure in church history? (**irony:** the letter *specifically warns* about such things)
 - b. and, the embrace of this *very short* letter by the church implies *some* connection to figures of apostolic or general leadership authority (**i.e.** it was *perceived* to be authoritative)
4. Jude (likely) = a brother of James, the half-brother of Jesus, and the author of our previous letter
 - a. **note:** in **Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3**, Jesus' brothers are listed: James, Joseph, Simon, Judas
 1. not *customary* to name his sisters, although **Mark 6:3** indicates Jesus had more than one
 2. **i.e.** we can conclude that Jesus had *at least* six (6) siblings
 - b. in Greek, “Judas” and “Jude” are transliterations (from one language to another) of the same word
 - c. and, the author *explicitly* makes a reference to James – he establishes his *authority to write* by appealing to James in **v. 1**, and calls him “brother” (**i.e.** and not in a “generic” sense of the word)
 - d. so Jude, brother of James, half-brother of Jesus is generally accepted to be the author of this book
 1. **and it has retained that tradition since the earliest days of the church**
5. **reminder:** the Roman Catholic position is that Mary remained a perpetual virgin, and that any brother (or sister) of Jesus is *either* a child of Joseph from another marriage *or* a cousin
 - a. however, the above accounts strongly suggest that Mary and Joseph had normal marital relations after Jesus and had other children (**see also Matthew 1:25**)
6. Jude undoubtedly (like James) *did not* come to faith in Jesus as Lord until *after* the Resurrection

- a. Paul mentions that Jesus met with *James* after he rose (**1 Corinthians 15:4, 7**)
 - b. but, there is no mention of *Jude* seeing Jesus after the Resurrection, so, we must assume that Jude was converted either by James himself (**very strong possibility**) or someone else
 - 1. **i.e.** the appeal in **v. 1** to James *strongly suggests* that Jude was connected to James
 - c. **LOW:** the childhood of Jesus was sufficiently “normal” (**i.e.** non-miraculous) for his family to fail to see him as the Messiah, requiring *in them also* the work of the Spirit (**e.g.** “For not even his brothers believed in him”; **John 7:5**)
- b. the dating of the letter**
- 1. Jude is *probably* dated in the “realm of the epistles,” written c. 60-65AD
 - a. Synoptic Gospels 50-60’s; Paul’s epistles 48-65; later epistles 60-90; Fourth Gospel in the 90’s
 - b. **timeline:** Jesus raised (c. 30), Jude converted (c. 31); Paul converted (c. 33); Paul in Tarsus (c. 34-47); James’ letter (c. 43); Paul’s missionary journeys (c. 47-57); Paul visits James in Jerusalem (c. 57); James martyred (c. 62); Paul martyred (c. 65)
 - c. thus, shortly *before* or *after* the death of James (an appeal to authority or an appeal to a martyr)
 - 2. Jude is *also* dateable from its literary similarities to **2 Peter 2**
 - a. suggesting either that Peter “borrowed” from this letter (c. 64-67, dating Jude earlier), or that Jude used Peter as source material (dating Jude to later), or *neither* (**i.e.** just a common reality)
 - 3. **question:** what was Jude doing between his conversion and the writing of this letter?
 - a. impossible to say *conclusively* (unlike James), but it is *highly likely* that Jude was either an elder in a local church or an itinerant preacher (**i.e.** he had seen the issues he outlines in the church)
- c. the authority of the letter**
- 1. although Calvin insists that Jude was an apostle (like James), there is *little likelihood* of that
 - a. **i.e.** the “other” Judas, son of James, mentioned in **Luke 6:16** is sometimes attributed to this Jude
 - 1. but it is virtually impossible for a brother of Jesus to be one of the Twelve (**given John 7:5**)
 - 2. and, it would seem *odd* that Jude would refer to himself *only* as the brother of James
 - 3. and, **v. 17** references “the apostles” in such a way as to suggest Jude was *not one of them*
 - 2. the authority of the letter comes from a) its relationship to James; b) its similarities to **2 Peter 2**; and c) its content, being seen by the early church as a *revelation* that fit the realities of the times

II. The Audience of Jude

Content

a. the audience of the letter

- 1. written to “those who are called, beloved in God the Father and kept for [or by] Jesus”
 - a. written to *fellow believers* – it is an **epistle** and was accepted as such
 - b. written to those who would have had *some* familiarity with 1) Jewish history (**see below**), 2) the writings of the apostles (**v. 17**), and 3) the situation of the church at the time
- 2. written to a *diverse* group of believers *well after* the advent of the Gentile mission
 - a. the introduction of false teachers into the church became a significant issue once the church “opened up” to non-Jews (**i.e.** after the missions of Paul and the vision of Peter)
 - 1. **i.e.** Jewish churches would have been much “tighter knit” with a common ethnicity
 - 2. **e.g.** James does not mention false teachers in his letter, written to a largely Jewish church
- 3. written to a *known* group of believers (**i.e.** not to an individual)
 - a. the use of “beloved” (**plural**) in **vv. 1, 2, 17, 20** suggests a strong *personal* connection to the audience (**i.e.** James’ use of “brothers” is less personal), so this letter is probably *not* an encyclical

b. the style of the letter

- 1. Jude employs literary similarities to **2 Peter 2**
 - a. **i.e.** implying that he used the same principles of interpretation of the O.T.
 - b. **e.g.** false teachers, bringing in heresy, whom many will follow (the point) – the point of **2 Peter 2**
- 2. Jude employs certain *well-known* Jewish apocalyptic traditions to make his point
 - a. **apocalyptic** = the revelation of judgment; **here:** the foreshadowing of judgment based upon the examples of those *who practiced the same things in their day*
 - b. **e.g.** people destroyed after being saved out of Egypt, the condemnation of fallen angels (**v. 5**), Sodom and Gomorrah (**v. 7**), the dispute over Moses’ body (**v. 9**), the examples of Cain, Balaam’s error and Korah’s rebellion (**v. 11**), and the prophecies of Enoch (**v. 14**)
- 3. Jude deploys one of the most well-known benedictions at the end of the letter (**vv. 24-25**)
 - a. designed to be a positive closing remark, a *prayer* seeking for God to hold the audience fast in the face of these *apocalyptic* warnings

III. The Applicability of Jude

Content

a. the content of Jude (v. 4)

1. Jude is a **warning epistle**, written specifically to warn the church against **false teachers**
 - a. **i.e.** the **infiltration** of the church by those who bring such false teachings (**read v. 4**)
 - b. specifically, the teaching that the grace of God allows the believer to indulge in “*sensuality*” – the *libertine* idea that the gospel “frees” the believer from constraints to indulge his appetites
 - c. **the bulk of this letter is a judgment oracle, comparing such false teachers (of the present day) to past individuals judged by God, warning of that judgment to fall again**
 - d. **James denounces false teachers as being under the judgment of God, and true believers need to avoid such men at all cost, lest they be swept away in their judgment**
2. short and simple outline: a) a greeting and intention statement (**vv. 1-4**); b) the pronouncement of judgment on false teachers (**vv. 5-16**); c) an exhortation to perseverance (**vv. 17-25**)

b. the application of Jude

1. the greatest danger to the church has always been **culture creep** = the insidious nature of the culture around the church seeping into the life and teachings of the church
 - a. **i.e.** the thinking of reprobate men becoming a part of the “theology” of the church
 - b. **e.g.** Gnosticism, liberalism, the seeker-sensitive movement, the emerging church movement
 - c. **e.g.** critical race theory = the idea that society is *irredeemably* racist, and so all “oppressor” groups must be in a state of “perpetual repentance” and making reparation towards the “oppressed”
 1. **the “woke” church** = a church that “recognizes” its inherent role in fostering the ills of society, and now preaches a “gospel” focused *primarily* on these “societal” ills
 2. **LOW**: a church that is hyper-focused on *racial equality* (or *equity*) both inside and out
2. **Jude is a warning that men bringing these forms of teaching are literally bringing the judgment of God from the culture into the church – bringing judgment into a place that should be centrally about freedom from judgment in the finished work of Christ**