

# GENERAL EPISTLE: JUDE

## INTRODUCTION

The book of Jude was likely written by Jesus' half-brother, Jude. We see him referenced in the Gospels (Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3), and he mentions in his greeting his relation to James, his brother (Jude 1). This letter was written between AD 60-80, but scholars are not completely clear about the identity of the letter's recipients. Some commentators believe them to be Messianic Jews based on his references to the Old Testament and other Jewish literature, as well as Jude's assumption of his audience's knowledge on these topics.

As you read Jude, you find that he originally intended to write to encourage believers in the faith they mutually share, but instead felt compelled to instruct them about the growing problem of false teachers who were creeping into the church. Themes include God's judgment toward disobedience, the danger of false teachers and their false doctrines, and the challenge for believers to "contend for the faith" (Jude 3).

## IMAGE FOR UNDERSTANDING

One time, my friend got a text from an unknown number that claimed to be the CEO of her company. He said he needed \$700 in visa gift cards as soon as possible. My friend immediately started heading toward the nearest store to help! After all, this was her boss. She trusted his credentials; and, if he said he needed help, then it must be true. Luckily, I was on the phone with her, so I asked the question, "How do you know it really is him?" She responded, "Because he said it was him in the text." After some further questioning, my friend realized that it was not in fact the CEO, but rather someone pretending to be him! Ultimately, this stranger's lie, if believed, would have caused my friend financial harm.

Just as this scammer claimed to be someone my friend knew and trusted, people in the book of Jude were coming into the church claiming to be believers, but they were only imposters—false teachers spreading false doctrine. The lies of these ungodly people were spiritually robbing and harming the church as they perverted the grace of God and denied Jesus Christ as Lord. Jude reminded believers of the claim the gospel has on truth and called them to fight for their faith so these lies would not continue to spread.

## BOOK ORGANIZATION

- Designation of False Teachers (Jude 1-4)
- Description of False Teachers (Jude 5-16)
- Defense against False Teachers (Jude 17-25)

## JESUS IN THE BOOK OF JUDE

You first see that Jude identifies himself as "a servant of Jesus Christ" and then the "brother of James" (Jude 1). His identity in Christ is his highest priority. Jude then addresses his letter to "those who are called, beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ" (Jude 1). Throughout

the epistle is the theme of the hope we have in Christ that endures even in the midst of the dangerous and deceitful messages of false teachers. Only by the power of Christ are we able to fight against the purveyors of such blasphemies and ungodliness! “But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.” (Jude 20-21) With the final words of Jude’s epistle, we see Christ glorified! Jesus is the one able to keep us from stumbling, and he *alone* deserves all the glory and honor.

## **BIBLE STUDY SPECIFICS: HOW TO APPROACH THE BOOK OF JUDE**

### **OBSERVATION**

- As you read Jude, answer the following questions and provide verse references for each. From there, take note of anything that is repeated or emphasized by the author.
  - Who is the author?
  - Who is the audience?
  - What stands out to you about Jude?
    - What was the author’s original intent?
    - What problems had arisen in the church?
    - What is the author’s solution?

### **INTERPRETATION**

How to interpret Jude:

- Literary context: Keep an eye out for the following literary devices used by Jude:
  - Discourse: Author uses logic and reasoning to persuade the reader.
  - Triad of Thought: Author uses groups of three to get a point across. (E.g., Jude 1: called, beloved, kept; Jude 2: mercy, peace, love)
  - Analogy: Author uses comparison between things to drive home points. (E.g., Jude 12-13)
- Narrative context: Are there other passages of Scripture that warn against false teachers? What do they say and how does their message relate to Jude? (See, e.g., Colossians 2.)
- Cultural Context: We see Jude reference Jewish literature in his epistle. What could this context tell us about who the intended audience was?

### **APPLICATION**

- Read Jude in light of Christ. What hope do we have as believers after reading this letter?
- How are you able to identify false teachers?
- How can you “contend” for your faith today?
- What are you called to remember?

### **PRAYER**

- Pray through Jude’s doxology:
- “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.”

- What can you thank God for or ask God for in light of Jude?

**CHURCH HISTORY: WHAT HAS CHURCH HISTORY SAID ABOUT THE BOOK OF JUDE:**

“Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James, speaks in his epistle of the advent of our Lord Jesus Christ to judgment: that we may fear and be cautious, and not, as though we were living in peace, be caught unaware and be found rather sleeping than watchful.”

—Origen of Alexandria

“Jude, who wrote the Catholic Epistle, the brother of the sons of Joseph, and very religious, while knowing the near relationship of the Lord, yet did not say that he himself was His brother. But what said he? 'Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ,' for all true knowledge is according to godliness.”

—Clement of Alexandria

