

JUDE

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BACKGROUND

Scarcely 40 years after Christ's death, many believers had become lax in doctrine and practice, and there were many false teachers preying upon them. Jude wrote to encourage Christians in their faith and to warn them of false teachers.

AUTHOR

Jude, brother of James and half brother of Jesus ([Jude 1:1](#); [Matthew 13:53-56](#)), who like his siblings did not believe in Christ's deity until after his resurrection ([John 7:5](#); [Acts 1:14](#)). Six other Judes are mentioned in the NT, but the fact that the author of this letter did not need to further identify either himself or James (a leader in the Jerusalem church) supports the view that he was well known as Christ's and James's brother.

DATE

Perhaps c. A.D. 69:

- [Jude 1:14-18](#) seems to describe the false teachers Peter had warned were coming ([2 Peter 2:1-19](#); [2 Peter 3:1-3](#)). While Peter, writing c. 64-67, expected their arrival soon ([2 Peter 2:1](#)), they had already arrived by the time Jude wrote ([Jude 1:4](#)).
- Jude probably wrote before Jerusalem's fall in 70, since if that event had already occurred it would have been natural for him to mention it in connection with the Exodus ([Jude 1:5](#)).
- [Jude 1:17](#) suggests that, though most of the apostles were gone by the time Jude wrote, many of his readers had been instructed by them.

RECIPIENTS

Christians everywhere ([Jude 1:1](#)), though reference to the OT and other Jewish writings suggests the recipients were primarily Jewish Christians.

PURPOSE

See [Background](#).

UNIQUE FEATURES

- Addressed to Christians everywhere, Jude is the most general NT letter.
- It emphasizes the relationship between right believing and right living.
- It chronicles opposition to God from before time ([Jude 1:6](#)) to the end of time ([Jude 1:14-15](#)).
- It is filled with OT illustrations.
- It is the only biblical reference to
 - the dispute over Moses' body ([Jude 1:9](#))
 - the prophecy of Enoch ([Jude 1:14-15](#))

COMPARISON WITH OTHER BIBLE BOOKS

James:

- Both use metaphors from nature ([Jude 1:10, 12-13](#); see [James: Unique Features](#)).

2 Peter:

- Jude said that the false teachers Peter prophesied would come—had indeed come.

OUTLINE

- I. WARNING OF APOSTATES ([Jude 1:1-16](#))
 1. Warning that apostates have come ([Jude 1:1-4](#))
 2. God's judgment of past apostasies ([Jude 1:5-7](#))
 - C. Description and doom of present apostates ([Jude 1:8-16](#))
- II. ADVICE TO BELIEVERS ([Jude 1:17-25](#))
 - A. Remember the warnings of apostasy ([Jude 1:17-19](#))
 - B. Guard your personal fellowship with God ([Jude 1:20-23](#))
 - C. Praise God always ([Jude 1:24-25](#))

TIMELINE

- | | |
|--------------|-------------------------------|
| c. A.D. 30?: | Jude believes on risen Christ |
| c. A.D. 69?: | Jude writes letter |
| A.D. 70: | Jerusalem destroyed |

[Jude 1:1-4](#) "*Here's why I'm writing.*" Writing to all believers loved and chosen by the Father and kept by the Son ([Jude 1:1](#)), Jude said that he had originally planned to write on the subject of salvation but felt led instead to address the serious problem of religious apostasy ([Jude 1:3-4](#)). The word used in verse 3 (translated "I must" or "I felt the necessity") means "to bear down upon; to compress." God literally pressured Jude to write concerning apostasy (compare [1 Cor. 9:16](#)).

We are to "defend the truth of the Good News," which God gave "once for all time to his holy people" ([Jude 1:3](#)):

- Defending the truth involves both offense and defense, as exemplified by Nehemiah (see [Neh. 4:16-18](#)).
- Now, in postbiblical times, the truth has been given to us "once for all time" in the canon of Scripture (see [How We Got the Bible](#)). We are not to add to or take from it (see [Rev. 22:18-19](#)).

[Jude 1:5-7](#) *Three guilty groups.* God judged apostasy severely in the past, as in the cases of Israel during the Exodus, a certain group of fallen angels, and Sodom and Gomorrah (compare [2 Peter 2:4-8](#)).

[Jude 1:8-10](#) *Disrespectful animals.* The false teachers, like brute beasts, were arrogant and immoral, even slandering angels ("glorious ones"). Jude contrasted their arrogance with the humility of Michael the archangel, who was reluctant to directly accuse even Satan himself. The occasion of Michael's confrontation with Satan is not recorded in Scripture but is recorded in the extra-biblical book *The Assumption of Moses*.

[Jude 1:11](#) *Examples from history.* Jude compared the present apostates to three historical apostates, all of whom have their counterparts today:

- Cain, who ignored God's wishes and offered a bloodless sacrifice (see [Genesis 4:1-7](#); [Hebrews 11:4](#); [1 John 3:12](#)). Many today, while claiming to be Christians, ignore God's Word.
- Balaam, the greedy prophet hired to curse Israel, who was reprimanded by his donkey (see [Numbers 22:1-25:9](#); [Rev. 2:14](#)). Many today make merchandise of the gospel.
- Korah, who slandered and rebelled against Moses (see [Numbers 16](#)). Present-day apostates speak evil against those who speak for God.

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[Jude 1:12-13](#) *Examples from nature.* Apostates are self-serving, like clouds without rain, trees without fruit, or stars that wander and are therefore useless as guides for travelers.

[Jude 1:14-16](#) *Even Enoch saw it coming.* Citing a prophecy by Enoch, Jude declared that God would someday judge these false teachers. Enoch predicted Christ's second coming and judgment centuries before he came the first time. Even so, his prediction of Christ's return "with thousands of his

holy ones" bears a striking similarity to predictions made by Paul and John (see [1 Thes. 3:13](#); [Rev. 19:11-14](#)). Jude quoted Enoch's prediction from the apocryphal book of Enoch, written c. 100 B.C.

[Jude 1:17-19](#) *More recent warnings of apostasy.* Moving closer to the present, Jude reminded his readers that the apostles had warned of these false teachers (see [2 Peter 2:1](#)). On the "last times," see exposition on [§1 Timothy 4:1-11](#).

[Jude 1:20-23](#) *"Strengthen yourselves, and others as well."* In the face of such erroneous and dangerous teaching, Christians should practice the twin virtues of prayer and patience, building them