



JUDE: “The Acts of the Apostates”
Week 1: Introduction to the book of Jude, Part 1
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My son’s question when he was very young: ‘What is the least read book in the Bible?’ (???)

Don’t know, but Dr. Douglas Rowston, a respected theologian and professor, described Jude in a scholarly article he wrote in 1975 as; “...*the most neglected book in the New Testament.*”

I. “WHY IS IT SO NEGLECTED?” (Some possible reasons):

- A. Perhaps its size and location: It has only 25 verses and it lies right beside *Revelation*, another, unfortunately, very neglected book.
- B. It shares a lot of similarities with *2 Peter*. However, *2 Peter* is easier to study and preach from. Nearly all of *Jude* is paraphrased in *2 Peter*. For this reason, some scholars wonder if *Jude* was directly inspired by *2 Peter*, or vice versa.
- C. It is densely packed with weighty, serious, and ‘mind-bending’ issues. As such, it’s not user-friendly for light topical overviews or any sort of ‘feel good’ / devotional-type ‘sermonettes.’
- D. Nearly every line is packed with Old Testament references. It doesn’t quote the Old Testament directly, but there are at least nine clear allusions to it. Since many churches today largely ignore the meat of the Old Testament, it also makes sense they would ignore *Jude*.
- E. *Jude* is unconventional. It wrestles with conventionally accepted ideas and understandings on certain matters (i.e. historical matters, anthropology, some doctrines, etc.) Most people do not like it when their conventional or preferred positions are challenged.
- F. *Jude* is a book that is “a call to action.” It challenges the reader to carefully consider the integrity of their own faith and to stand up and do something for the truth. In *vs 3*, it instructs us to “*contend for the faith.*” That takes work, and most folks prefer apathy instead.
- G. Lastly, *Jude* is very confrontational. It is the only New Testament book nearly entirely devoted to apostasy, which is a ‘departure from the truth.’ It puts wrong ideas on one side, and truth on the other. This forces an honest look in the mirror. Many people say they want the truth, but they don’t welcome it when it is provided.

II. Opening thoughts:

A. How best to approach the study of Jude? (Two possible approaches):

1. **Topically:** (Taking various themes contained in it and approaching each one as a topic). A lot of churches might choose this approach since it’s easier, and you can leapfrog over the tough stuff.
2. **Expositional:** (Teaching it verse by verse, in order to understand the intentions and passions of the divinely inspired author). This will be our approach.
 - a. **NOTE:** As a rule, I think expositional teaching of God’s Word, whenever that is possible, is the best approach.

- b. By this I mean: It is important to explain the precise meaning of a given portion of Scripture. Serious mistakes can happen when we let ourselves imagine the Bible does not mean what it says.
- c. As I maintain this expositional standard from one verse to the next one, I'm most enabled to understand and declare the message God intended to communicate. So, this will be our approach.

B. Now, this expositional approach will still introduce several tangents. These are topics by themselves that we will explore a bit. Examples:

1. **Vs. 14** – A prophecy contained in the non-canonical Book of Enoch (**Enoch 1:9**). We will explore a little bit of history and background about the Book of Enoch and other non-canonical books such as the Book of Jasher (quoted in Joshua).
2. **Vs. 3** – Jude here talks about *“the salvation we share,”* and we'll take a little look into the foundations of the Gospel and how we ought to respond to 'the salvation we share.'
3. **Vs. 6** - Introduces some unusual activities of fallen angels. We will have a little look into angelology and demonology to help us better understand the implications of this peculiar passage.
4. **Vs. 11** – Mentions 'Balaam's error.' To better understand the meaning of this, we will look into the story of Balaam and his talking donkey. (like Shrek)
5. **Vs. 19** – Discusses men who divide you, who and follow natural instincts, and do not have the Spirit.
 - a. This is one of a number of sections of Jude that deal with false teachers. We must be on guard for false doctrines which can so easily deceive us.
 - b. If we are not well equipped in the Word of God, it is easy to be led astray while thinking 'everything is OK,' so we may get into some considerable depth as we explore the text.

C. NOTE: This type of expositional approach generally assumes there is a certain knowledge by the reader or listener. Our approach to this study will seek to put a net around this essential body of knowledge in order for us to better understand Jude.

1. This will take some time! (There are only 25 vss, but they may likely take us a year or more...)
2. It may feel at times as though we are becoming invested into distracting topics, however, it is important to extract from the expositional approach the full meaning and intent of the seminal author, God Himself.
3. Once again, this requires a literal hermeneutic: a style of interpretation that is natural, and which does not deliberately insert symbolic meaning into normal language.
 - a. "If the plain sense of scripture makes good sense, seek no other sense lest it result in nonsense."

III. Perhaps the best way of 'getting our feet wet' is to touch on the "five W's." "Who?", "What?", "Where?", "When?", "Why?", (and "Whodunnit?"). **Read vs. 1.**

1. **WHO: (as in 'Who wrote the Book of Jude?')**

1. Consider the nature of the epistles (a greater selection than just the Pauline epistles)
2. **Like other epistles (i.e. Peter, James, John), Jude gets its name from its author.** Most scholars identify the writer as the half-brother of Jesus. There are two clues:
 - a. First, the writer identifies himself as the "brother of James" (**Cf. Jude 1:1**) – it is difficult to read any other interpretation into this introduction.
 - b. Second, **Matthew 13:55** states the names of Jesus' brothers as James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas (Note: Jesus also had sisters **Cf. Matthew 13:55-56.**)
 - So why didn't Jude just identify himself as a brother of Jesus?
 - Probably, Jude does not identify himself as a brother of Jesus out of humility and reverence for Christ.
 - This shows a change of heart in Jude, because before the resurrection of Jesus, he apparently did not acknowledge his brother as the Messiah (**Cf. John 7:3-5**)

3. **Two questions here:**

- **FIRST, why would Jude be called "Jude" here as the writer of this book and "Judas" in the Gospels before that point?** (Answer: Probably because nobody today wants to call their son Judas as it carries a stigma with 'Judas Iscariot'). Various English translations have changed the name to 'Jude.'
 - NOTE: As I hinted at earlier, most scholars feel that Judas, Jesus' brother, did not place his faith in Jesus *early on*: (**Cf. Matthew 12:46; 13:56 > implications; and John 7:3-5 > stated clearly!**).
 - INTERESTING ISSUE TO CONSIDER: In a sense, Jesus was 'betrayed' by his own brother Judas at the start of His earthly ministry, and by His disciple Judas at the end of His earthly ministry.
 - Again, this suggests a real turnaround for Jude, as he now urges us in this tiny book to "*contend for the faith.*"
 - NOTE: Easier for me to refer to him as 'Jude' rather than 'Judas' for this series.
- **SECOND, why would Jude be the 'half-brother of Jesus when the crowds of Matthew call him Jesus' brother?'**
(Answer: Jesus and 'Jude' had the same mother, but different fathers. This was not recognized by the neighbors (**Cf. Luke 3:23**), and probably not by Jude either.)
 - Jesus was not the son of Joseph, as James was for example, but the son of God the Father Himself. This fact wouldn't fully sink into Jude's mind and heart for years.

- It may not have been until Jesus' death and resurrection, along with His subsequent physical appearances, that Jude finally understood who his half-brother really was.
- Jude may have taken some sort of missionary journey (with his wife) according to the big picture arguments of *1 Corinthians 9:1-5* when Paul argues his status as an apostle, as well as his personal rights.
- Regardless, from these few insights, a portrait of Jude seems to take shape.
 - ❖ He was a close physical relative of Jesus who initially lived in skepticism and later came to a powerful faith in Jesus.
 - ❖ He probably journeyed for the sake of the gospel, telling the good news in city after city, and possessing the unique angle of sharing the same name as Judas Iscariot.
 - ❖ My own guess is he may have had a unique testimony, being himself an example of faithfulness, in stark contrast to one who strayed in faith and betrayed Jesus.

4. Wrapping up some of the other “WHO?” elements here....

NOTE: There are eight people with the name ‘Jude’ that appear in the NT (Greek: ‘Judas;’ Hebrew ‘Judah’), which begs the question, “Why such a common name?” Two possible theories:

- a. Judas Maccabees was a great hero of the Jewish people during inter-testament period (roughly 400 years total time). He was a leader during the Jewish revolt against Antiochus Epiphanes (who is a prominent type of the antichrist).
 - Naturally – people name their children after folks they admire and look up to (Which is why there are no ‘Whoopi’s’ out there...)
- b. Judah was also the name of the father of the tribe of Judah, the tribe to which King David belonged.
 - “Judah,” therefore was a very patriotic name!
 - The fact that so many men were named Judas around this time might suggest there were great Jewish passions for a rebellion against Rome.
- c. Strong traditions are that Jude became a leader in the early church after the death of his brother James (who was martyred by historical accounts around 62 AD).
 - This would have been a very well-known event, and it may partly account for Jude’s reference to his brother James in *vs 1*.
- d. This piece of information naturally leads us to “**WHEN?**” (as in “When was the book of Jude written?)

2. WHEN was the book of Jude written?

1. **An important consideration that I mentioned earlier:** The content of Jude is closely related to the content of *2 Peter*.

2. Specifically, the language and wording (use of phrases) are remarkably alike and there are as many as 16 such events! (Note: only 25 total vss in Jude). Three examples:
 - a. **2 Peter 2:4** – *“For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment,”*
Jude 6 – *“And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day,”*
 - b. **2 Peter 2:10** – *“And especially those who indulge the flesh in its corrupt desires and despise authority. Daring, self-willed, they do not tremble when they revile angelic majesties,”*
Jude 8 – *“Yet in the same way these men, also by dreaming, defile the flesh, and reject authority, and revile angelic majesties.”*
 - c. **2 Peter 3:3** – *“Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts,”*
Jude 18 – *“that they were saying to you, “In the last time there will be mockers, following after their own ungodly lusts.”*

NOTE: The similarities of language and content between **Jude** and **2 Peter** are so similar that some commentaries of one book will also include a commentary on the other.

3. **(A related point): We have strong evidence to suggest 2 Peter was written just before Peter’s martyrdom in 67 AD.**
 - a. If **Jude** and **2 Peter** shared some sort of relationship, this begins to place the book of **Jude** somewhere around that same timeframe.
 - b. Three ways the two books might be related:
 - Both Peter and Jude derive inspiration from a common apostolic / early church message or passion.
 - Peter borrowed from what Jude wrote, or....
 - Jude borrowed from what Peter wrote. (Scholars debate which process).
4. **(Another thing to consider regarding the “WHEN?” question is the matter of the book of Enoch) - - Regarding the quote from the Book of Enoch: (Jude 14-15; & in The Book of Enoch Ch. 2).**
 - a. NOTE: The Book of Enoch was widely employed by the early church. 2nd and 3rd Century, “Church Fathers” like Irenaeus, Origin and Clement of Alexandria all make use of the Book of Enoch.
 - b. Tertullian (160-230 C.E) did the same. He is known in church history as the first church leader to write his works in Latin. He wrote most of his writing in defense of Christianity against persecution from outside or against heresy from within, and Tertullian called the Book of Enoch “Holy Scripture.”
 - c. The Ethiopic Church even added the Book of Enoch to its official canon, and it’s from this source that scholars study the most consistent and reliable records of the Book of Enoch.

- d. NOTE: I believe the current canon of scripture to be complete and final, but how and when our canon came into being is an issue worthy of personal study. Suffice it to say not everyone agreed with the inclusion of **Enoch**.
 - e. So, with all that said, the parallels between **Jude** and **Enoch** are very clear, but the parallels between **2 Peter** and **Enoch** are more vague.
 - f. If the assumption is **2 Peter** came first and Peter purposely diluted his **Enoch** references, we would then have to also assume something that is unlikely. We'd need to assume that **Jude** borrowed from **2 Peter**, noticed that **2 Peter** diluted all direct references to **Enoch**, and decided to restore those passages.
5. I think it is more likely that Peter's indirect similarities with **Enoch** are explained by Peter being one-step removed from **Enoch**. Where Jude makes clear use of **Enoch**, Peter likely borrowed from Jude, but added new material. He likely modified the original **Enoch** section to suit his purposes.
 6. **Remember too...** it is most likely that Jude emerged as a church leader following the death of his brother, James, in 62 AD.
 7. Since Peter's death is recorded as being about 67 AD, that gives Jude five years to put his passions into writing and produce the book of **Jude**. There are hints from various records that Jude may have earned a reputation for being direct about his thoughts.
 8. My personal opinion is that **Jude** probably came before **2 Peter**, and Peter, under divine inspiration, borrowed from Jude.
 9. **The errors and heresies that the Book of Jude combats are those that history shows developed at an early date.**
 - a. It's the same situation as those errors that are dealt with in **2 Peter**.
 - b. By contrast, there are different classic heresies of the 2nd century (i.e. the God of the Old Testament was different than the God of the New Testament, Gnosticism, etc.)
 - c. The errors that **Jude** deals with are those which did develop in the church at an early date. Here are some examples: I'll read a couple of passages to illustrate – they include:
 - Distortion of Biblical truth by false teachers with their own agendas – (**Cf. Acts 20:29-30**)
 - The tolerance and acceptance of sin – (**Cf. Romans 6:1**)
 - Looking past and not dealing with sexual sin in the congregation – (**Cf. 1 Corinthians 5:1-11**)
 - Legalism and doctrinal rigidity – (**Cf. Galatians 5:13**)

NOTE: Perhaps you are thinking “This all sounds very familiar....it sounds like the church today.”
YOU ARE CORRECT! This is why Jude is VERY RELEVANT for us to be studying right now.

Conclusion: There is nothing within **Jude** itself that requires us to consider a date beyond the lifetime of Jude. The Book of Jude was probably written somewhere between 62 and 80 AD, and so most likely after James' death and before Peter's death.

Jude, while initially skeptical of his divine half-brother, later became a powerful voice for the person and work of Jesus Christ. His testimony was a unique one, and Jude was known for being a straight shooter. He tackled errors and heresies in the church head-on.

We will have much to learn from this book since so much of its content is true for today.