

Study 12: Introduction to Jude

Introduction

Jude is a “general epistle” because it is not written to a specific person (as were Timothy, Titus, and Philemon), or a specific church (Romans, Corinthians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians), or a specific group of churches (Galatians). Although, Jude addresses some specific problems, and may have had a specific church or group of churches in mind when he wrote the letter – but he doesn’t let us in on just who they are!

Body of the Study

The Recipients of the Letter

The Author of the Letter

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Homework and preparation for next week:

Read the whole book in a single sitting, and a few days later read it again.

Read the notes as a review of the study

Review the introduction and conclusion, (page 5 of the notes) and find the key words & thoughts. Put these together into a “story” to find the key things that Jude wants to tell us about the letter.

Notes for study 12: Introduction to Jude

Like James and Peter's letters, Jude is a "general epistle" because it is not written to a specific person (as were Timothy, Titus, and Philemon), or a specific church (Romans, Corinthians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians), or a specific group of churches (Galatians). Although, Jude addresses some specific problems, and may have had a specific church or group of churches in mind when he wrote the letter – but he doesn't let us in on just who they are!

Acceptance of Jude as a part of the New Testament Canon has had some discussion, with some early writers questioning it, although it was accepted by many others.

The Recipients of the Letter

We have little information regarding the recipients of the letter, however it is strongly Jewish in its content. He draws significantly on the Jewish apocryphal writers (*The Assumption of Moses; The Book of Enoch; The Testament of Naphtali; The Testament of Asher*), and it is clear that his readers understood where the facts and writings came from.

We have no information as to where these brethren were, although they apparently had personal knowledge of both Jude and James. The Lord's brothers apparently travelled around quite a bit (1 Cor 9:5), and as the letter mirrors 2nd Peter, then it is not unreasonable that the recipients of the letter were in a similar area. Second Peter is concluded to be the same recipients as 1st Peter (Northern Asia Minor), and so the recipients of Jude were probably in a similar area (Asia Minor generally), although we cannot have any degree of certainty in this regard.

The Author of the Letter

The writer claims to be "...*Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James...*" (1:1 NKJV). He makes no further claim or explanation as to which Jude, or which James are in question. There were several men named Jude who featured in the New Testament, with two of them amongst the apostles, being Judas Iscariot and Judas the brother of James (Lk 6:16 KJV). However, other translations have "...*Judas the son of James...*" and the Greek is not specific, except to identify that there is a relationship between these two men.

Jude does not identify which James he is the brother of, but the one referred to in Lk 6 was James the son of Alphaeus. We know very little about him, and he had little prominence (but that is not to say little authority – since he was an apostle) in the early church. The fact that Jude simply refers to "*James*" suggests that the readers would know who that James was! The only James that had such prominence in the early church at that time was James the Lord's brother (see introduction to the epistle of James).

We know that Jesus had several (half) brothers and sisters "...*Isn't this the carpenter's son? Isn't his mother's name Mary, and aren't his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas? ⁵⁶ Aren't all his sisters with us?...*" (Mt 13:55-56 NIV); and we know that two of them were James and Jude. So, the logical conclusion is that it was Jude the Lord's brother who was the author of the letter.

Neither James nor Jude claim in their writings to be the brothers of the Lord, but rather to be His servants, which shows their great humility. Two tests confirm the work as belonging to Jude – the internal evidence, and the external evidence:

Internal evidence for Jude's authorship is purely based on his claim in 1:1, as we have no other writings to compare it to, although there are strong similarities between Jude and 2nd Peter. Further internal evidence for Jude the Lord's brother, rather than Jude the "son" of Alphaeus comes from 1:17, where he talks about the Lord's apostles in the third person – ie he was not one of them.

External evidence for Jude is strong, and Origen (AD 230) says that the author of Jude was the Jude mentioned in the gospels as a brother of Jesus. Jerome (AD 392) also describes the book as having been written by “Jude the brother of James”.

Further evidence of the place of Jude in the Canon of New Testament is shown from the early writers, who regarded it as scripture. The Muratorian canon (AD 170) is one of the earliest lists of New Testament books, and includes Jude amongst the books which were generally accepted. Tertullian (AD 200) recognised the book as an ancient christian document, and Clement of Alexandria (AD 200) had so much respect for the book that he wrote a commentary on it! Origen created a catalogue of Canonical books around AD 220 (or only about 100 years after the death of the last apostle, John), although it omitted the letters of James and Jude. However, he elsewhere refers to them, and of Jude he says: “*And Jude wrote an epistle, of a few lines indeed, but full of powerful words of the heavenly grace, who at the beginning says: Jude the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James*”

Date and Occasion of the Letter

Occasion:

The date and occasion of the letter can be ascribed by noticing the very strong similarities between Jude and 2nd Peter. In many ways they parallel each other, suggesting that they were written to address similar situations. The false teachers (the Gnostics in 2nd Peter, although not clear in Jude) were libertines who were travelling around introducing the false deceptive doctrines. Jude writes to warn the brethren about these people.

Jude intended to write a longer letter “...*concerning our common salvation...*” (1:4), yet he found it necessary to write the short letter – probably forced by the urgency of the situation. His stated purpose is to “...*exhort you to contend earnestly for the faith...*” (1:4).

Date:

The date and authorship of 2 Peter is much questioned, and a lot of that discussion centres around the pre-dating of Jude – ie, it is supposed that Jude pre-dated 2nd Peter, or that the writer of 2nd Peter “copied” the theme of Jude and put out the letter with the pseudo-authorship of “Peter”. Discussion around Jude arises because Gnosticism arose largely in the second-century.

The similarities between writings should not be driven in an attempt to say that one writer “copied” or “followed an outline or theme” from another writer. This is especially so when both writers (in this case Peter and Jude) wrote general epistles addressing how christians should live in response to the political and spiritual climate of the time; and that both writers wrote what they did by inspiration from God.

As discussed in the introduction to 2nd Peter, I do not concur with the conclusions of late writing, and therefore date 2nd Peter around AD 67, and therefore Jude around the same time.

The style of the letter

At first read, Jude seems to be nothing but a string of criticism and denunciation. But to conclude that is to overlook the clear imperatives of the introduction (1-4) and the conclusion (20-25), where the clear message is to encourage the brethren to stand fast in the face of adversity within the church. Rather than adverse criticism of these people, he gives practical advice on how to deal with them, and shows great pastoral care for them (22-23).

“Jude is ... a passionate defence of Jewish Christian faith and life to believers living in the midst of a pluralistic and permissive pagan society. And therein lies one of its great values for Christians the world over in our own day”¹

Outline of the letter

The following outline is adapted from Fee & Stuart²

- 1-2 *Salutation,*
- 3-4 *Reason for Writing*
- 5-7 *Three Warning Examples*
- 8-10 *Second Description of False Teachers*
- 11-16 *Further Warning Examples*
- 17-19 *Apostolic Warning*
- 20-23 *Call to Perseverance*
- 24-25 *Benediction*

Selected Bibliography

The following references will be used and quoted from during the studies. The full reference of the books are quoted here, and only their abbreviated title and page number will be quoted in the studies.

Cogdill

Cogdill, Roy E: “The New Testament: Book by Book – A 26 Lesson Outline series covering the entire New Testament”

Cogdill Foundation Publications, P.O. Box 403 Marion Ind. 46952

Eusebius

“The Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius Pamphilus”

Baker Book House, Grand Rapids MI 49516

ISBN 0-8010-3306-3

Fee & Stuart

Gordon D Fee & Douglas Stuart: “How to Read the Bible Book by Book”

Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI 49530

ISBN 0-310-21118-2

Kelcey

Kelcey, Ramond C: “The letters of Peter and Jude” The Living Word Commentary

R. B. Sweet Co.; Inc. Austin, Tx

ISBN 0-8344-0073-1

Schreiner

Schreiner, Thomas R: “The New American Commentary; 1,2 PETER, JUDE”

¹ Green, p. 54

² Fee & Stuart, p. 409-410

Key points – Introduction & Conclusion

By looking at the introduction and conclusion to the letter, we can derive some of the key thoughts that Peter wants to bring out to the readers – especially when they appear in both the introduction and the conclusion.

Take some time to circle the key thoughts in each section, and then link the common ones together. The keys to the introduction are Jude's use of *But I want you to know...* as a call to action, and the short conclusion with a plea for action. ... Quotation is taken from the NIV.

JUDE 1:1 Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and a brother of James,

To those who have been called, who are loved by God the Father and kept by Jesus Christ:

JUDE 1:2 Mercy, peace and love be yours in abundance.

JUDE 1:3 Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints. ⁴ For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.

JUDE 1:5 Though you already know all this, I want to remind you ...

JUDE 1:20 But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit. ²¹ Keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.

JUDE 1:22 Be merciful to those who doubt; ²³ snatch others from the fire and save them; to others show mercy, mixed with fear--hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh.

JUDE 1:24 To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy-- ²⁵ to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.