

# THE EPISTLE OF JUDE

(Notes prepared by L. Dwight Custis)

## 1. Who was Jude? Was he the Apostle Jude?

Although there was an apostle by this name (Luke 6:16), the writer of this epistle does not call himself an apostle of Jesus Christ, but "the servant of Jesus Christ".

Furthermore, he speaks of the apostles as distinct from himself. See Jude 17, 18. Contrast this with 2 Peter 3:2, "us the Apostles".

Therefore, we can eliminate the idea that he was an apostle.

He does call himself, "the brother of James". What James is he referring to?

There were two apostles by the name of James: James the son of Zebedee, and James the son of Alphaeus. See Luke 6:14, 15. There is no evidence that James the son of Zebedee had any other brother than John. Similarly, we have nothing to indicate that James the son of Alphaeus had a brother named Jude. (In Luke 6:16, the phrase, "And Judas the brother of James", is more correctly translated in the American Standard Version, "And Judas the son of James". The Greek has neither brother nor son, but is literally, And Judas of James.)

For the above reasons it seems that we are on safe ground to say that Jude was neither an apostle nor was he related to an apostle.

What other possibilities are there?

We can assume that the "James" referred to in Jude 1 was evidently so well-known that he needed no further identification. For this reason the early church considered him to be James, the half-brother of our Lord, the head of the Jerusalem church, and the writer of "The General Epistle of James".

Matthew 13:55 and Mark 6:3 give the names of the Lord's half-brothers. It is here that we learn not only about James, but also Judas is mentioned. This would mean that the writer of the epistle before us was also a half-brother of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is thought that, out of humility and in order not to assume undue authority, Jude identifies himself as a brother of James rather than as a (half) brother of the Lord.

## 2. Why did Jude write this epistle?

A comparison between Jude and 2 Peter reveals some amazing similarities, particularly with 2 Peter 2 and the first part of 2 Peter 3:

- (1) Compare Jude 4, 6-13, 16 with 2 Peter 2:1, 4, 6, 10-13, 15, 17, 18.
- (2) Compare Jude 17, 18 with 2 Peter 3:2, 3.

Obviously one of these is taken from the other. Who wrote first: Jude, or Peter?

It is generally assumed that Jude is repeating what Peter had said since in 2 Peter 2:1 the false teachers have not yet come. In Jude 4 they have arrived.

Thus, Jude writes to remind his readers of the importance of what Peter had already told them regarding false teachers and their evil influence.

## 3. To whom did he write?

In the section above it has been implied at least that Jude was writing to the same people who received Peter's epistles. The only way Jude identifies them is

by the terms he uses in verse 1. But it does seem that, by a comparison of Jude and 2 Peter we are on safe ground to say that Jude also wrote to Jews "scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia" (1 Peter 1:1). This would include the entire peninsula of Asia Minor. (2 Peter 3:1 indicates that 1 and 2 Peter were both written to the same people.) Obviously some Christian Gentiles in the area would also be included (as parts of the epistles would bear out), but the numerous references to the Old Testament and to Jewish traditions imply that the readers were predominantly Jewish in background.

#### 4. When did Jude write?

Chronologically Jude comes before 1, 2, and 3 John.

Our notes have already shown that Jude followed the writing of Peter's two epistles. The dates generally given to 1 Peter are A. D. 64, or 65, with 2 Peter appearing in 66 or 67. Robertson sets the martyrdom of Peter in A. D. 67 or 68. So Jude must have been written in the late 60's, very probably just after Peter's death, but before the destruction of Jerusalem in A. D. 70 since no reference is made to this latter event.

#### 5. Outline:

- I. Salutation (vv. 1, 2).
- II. Statement of the purpose of the epistle (vv. 3, 4).
- III. Message (vv. 5-23):
  - A. A solemn reminder of past divine judgments (vv. 5-7).
  - B. An exposé of the false teachers (vv. 8-16).
  - C. Exhortations (vv. 17-23):
    1. A solemn reminder of past apostolic warnings regarding these "mockers" (vv. 17-19).
    2. Practical measures to be taken (vv. 20-23).
- IV. Benediction (vv. 24, 25).