

Introduction to Jude

Where is it in the Bible?

Jude is the twenty-sixth book in the New Testament and comes between 3 John and Revelation. It is the last of the catholic or general letters (James through Jude).

Who wrote it?

In Greek, the name of the author of this letter is *Ioudas*, which may be translated in English as “Jude”, “Judas”, or Judah”. Although there are several men with the same name in the Bible (for example, two of the twelve disciples; see Luke 6:16), this letter has traditionally been associated with the man identified as a brother of Jesus in Matthew 13:55. There are a number of arguments in favor of this point of view, including the fact it was undisputed in the early Church. The alternative is that the letter is anonymous and the unknown author identified himself as Jude to increase the authority and influence of what he wrote.

When was it written?

To some extent, the dating of the letter depends on its authorship. If Jude the brother of Jesus is assumed to be the author, then the letter could have been written sometime between 50 and 60, around the same time as Paul's letters; however, if Jude was a younger brother of Jesus, the letter could be as late as the 80s or 90s. If the letter is anonymous, it could also have been written any time during the last part of the first century.

What is it about?

The letter of Jude is a warning to early Christians against false teachers who have come into the community and are living in ungodly ways. He urges his readers to confront these people, to be faithful, and to live in accordance with the Gospel.

How is it structured?

- I. Salutation and Blessing (1-2)
- II. Reason for the Letter (3-4)
- III. False Teachers (5-16)
- IV. Warnings and Exhortations (17-23)
- V. Concluding Doxology (24-25)

What are some things to look for?

- **Judgment for False Teachers:** Although the writer does not even identify the false teachers he is accusing, he is certain that they have been condemned (v. 4) and judged by God (v. 13b). To support this, he cites the examples of sinners from the past, including Cain, Balaam, Korah, and others from the Old Testament.

- **Parallels with 2 Peter:** Although early scholars thought that the author of Jude borrowed from 2 Peter, it now seems that it was the other way around. “By most estimates, about nineteen of Jude's twenty-five verses have been reworked to reappear somewhere in 2 Peter.”¹ Such borrowing was not unusual in the ancient world. “This tells us that the problem that Jude addressed was no isolated incident: Christians continued to struggle with the question of which voices within the church should be trusted, and with the related question of how to define criteria according to which the validity of diverse faith expressions should be determined”²
- **Unique Sources:** This letter uses a number of unusual sources, including Jewish traditions and nonbiblical materials (vv. 6, 9, and 14-15). The author also seems to have been using a Hebrew version of the Old Testament. This has led scholars to suggest that he was writing to Jewish Christians, possibly in Palestine.

1 Mark Allan Powell, *Introducing the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 481.

2 Powell, 517.