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# THE EPISTLE OF JUDE

## BY

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##### Introduction

The Epistle of Jude is the last Epistle preceding the great final book with which the Holy Scriptures conclude, the book of Revelation. We believe the place given to this Epistle is the right one, for as we shall see, it reveals the conditions, religiously and morally, which prevail on earth before the great coming event takes place, of which Revelation has so much to say. Some have called it "the preface to the Revelation."

##### The Author

We are not left in doubt who the writer is, for he mentions himself in the beginning of it. It is Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James. But who is this Jude or Judas? Among the disciples were two by the name of Judas. There was Judas Iscariot, who ended his miserable career, after he had become the instrument of the devil, by hanging. In John 14:22 we read, "Judas saith unto Him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that Thou wilt manifest Thyself unto us, and not unto the world?" The Spirit of God makes it plain that Judas Iscariot did not address Jesus by the name Lord, which expresses faith in His deity, but that there was another Judas in the apostolate who speaks here.

When we turn to the names of the twelve in Matthew 10:2-4, we find the name of Judas but once; it is the name of him who betrayed the Lord. The Judas whose words are recorded in the above passage in the Gospel of John, is called in Matthew 10:3 ... Lebbeaus whose surname was Thaddaeus." In Luke 6:16 and Acts 1:13, his name is given as Judas of James; it must be noticed that the words in the authorized version "the brother" are in italics, which means that they are supplied by the translators. It is not so in the first verse of this epistle; here the writer calls himself "brother of James."

But there is still another Judas found in the Gospels. His name is recorded in Matthew 13:55. "is not this the carpenter's son? is not His mother called Mary? and His brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas?" The James, the brother of the Lord mentioned in this passage, is the author of the Epistle of James. (See introduction to the Epistle of James). The question then arises, is the writer of the Epistle before us,

the Apostle Judas of James, also called Lebbaeus, surnamed Thaddaeus, or is it Judas, the one who is called one of the Lord's brethren, and therefore the natural brother of James, the writer of the Epistle of James? Some maintain that Jude is the Apostle Judas, while others see in Jude the brother of James, as given in Matthew 13-55. We endorse the latter view. We give the reasons why the writer of this Epistle cannot be the Apostle Judas.

1. He does not speak of himself as an apostle. He designates himself as a servant of Jesus Christ. Whenever an apostle calls himself a servant of Jesus Christ, he adds his apostleship, as we learn from Romans 1:1, Titus 1:1; 2 Peter 1:1. The only exception is the epistle to the Philippians, in which Paul associates with himself in the address Timothy, and then speaks of himself and Timothy as servants of Jesus Christ.

2. If he were the Apostle Judas, the brother of the Apostle James, the sons of Alphaeus, we have to face great difficulties, as Dean Alford states, involving the wholly unjustifiable hypothesis, that those who are called in Scripture the brethren of our Lord were not His brethren, but His cousins, sons of Alphaeus (Cleopas).

But why does the writer of this Epistle not speak of himself as "the brother of the Lord?" It has been asked. James does not do so in his Epistle either. He is silent about his relationship and so is his brother Jude. "The question, Why does not Jude mention his earthly relationship to the Lord? shows great ignorance of the true spirit of the writers of the New Testament. It would be the last thing I should expect, to find one of the brethren of the Lord asserting this relationship as a ground of reception for an Epistle. Almost all agree that the writer of the Epistle of James was the person known as the brother of the Lord. Yet there we have no designation. It would have been in fact altogether inconsistent with the true spirit of Christ (Luke 20:27, 28), and in harmony with those later superstitious feelings with which the next and following generations regarded His earthly relatives. Had such a designation as "Adelphos tou Kyriou" (brother of the Lord) been found in the address of an Epistle, it would have formed a strong a priori objection to its authenticity" (Prolegomena).

Jude is therefore the one mentioned in Matthew 13:55. Apart from this Epistle we know nothing more of him. The date of the Epistle is about the year 65.

#### Its Authenticity

It is authenticated by different ancient sources. The Muratorian fragment mentions it as Jude's Epistle. Clement of Alexandria cites it as Scripture, as well as Tertullian and others. The theories of some objecting critics need not to be considered.

To whom the Epistle was originally addressed is not stated. Some have surmised that like James and the Petrine Epistles Jude addressed originally Jewish believers. This may be true, for Jude mentions, prominently, like Peter, Old Testament facts, besides some Jewish traditional matters, which thereby are confirmed as facts. Concerning the apocryphal writings, which especially the book of Enoch, which Jude is charged with having used in the composition of his Epistle, we shall have more to say in the annotations.

## Jude and 2 Peter 2

As stated in the introduction to the Second Epistle of Peter, Jude's testimony is very much like the testimony of the Apostle Peter in the second chapter of his second Epistle. Hence there has been a long controversy whether Jude copied from Peter or Peter copied from Jude. We have stated before that if Jude had copied from Peter, his epistle could not be an inspired Epistle, and so if Peter copied from Jude. Jude may have known Peter's Epistle, but that does not mean that he used Peter's Epistle, but the Holy Spirit gives a similar testimony through Jude, which is, after a closer examination, somewhat different from Peter's epistle. This is pointed out in the annotations.

### The Message of Jude

It seems about the time when Jude wrote his letter a departure from the faith set in among believers. This is confirmed by the fact that other epistles written about the same time give warnings of the same nature as those given by Jude. The message of Jude may be called a prophetic history of the apostasy of Christendom from its beginning in apostolic days down to the end of the age, when the complete apostasy will be dealt with and completely destroyed by the coming of the Lord. It is the darkest forecast of the end of the age which the Spirit of God has given in the Epistles. While apostasy and antichristianity have held sway all through the history of Christendom, there is coming in the end of this age a consummation, the evils of which are pictured by the Holy Spirit through the pen of Jude. We know that we are living right in the midst of the fulfillment of Jude's message. The Epistle is, therefore, of great importance for our times.

### Analysis and Annotations

#### I. THE INTRODUCTION

Verses 1-2. Jude in his brief introduction speaks of the Christian believers, whom he addresses, as called ones, sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ. The latter statement may also be translated "kept for Jesus Christ." What was true of the believers in Jude's day is true of all believers. Especially comforting is the fact, that, no matter how dark the days may be, however strong the current of evil, those who are "the beloved of God called saints" will be preserved in Jesus Christ and kept for Him as the members of His body, till He comes. He keeps His own. It is the blessed assurance that the believer's keeping rests in His own hands. In the Revelation we see in the glory vision that Christ holds seven stars in His right hand, which is the symbol of the hand of His power with which He keeps His own. Then there is the prayer that "mercy, and peace, and love may be multiplied."

#### II. THE PURPOSE AND OCCASION OF THE EPISTLE

Verses 3-4. "Beloved, giving all diligence to write unto you of our common salvation, I was constrained to write unto you exhorting you to earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."

It had evidently been upon the heart of Jude to write an epistle to the Christians whom he knew. He gave all diligence to carry out his

intention. This must mean that he prayed and thought over this matter. He then decided to write about the common salvation. This is the gospel.

It is the nearest and the dearest object to every believer, for it is the matchless story of God's love. It reveals the Son of God, our Lord, who died for our sins, who was buried and rose again the third day. There are blessed depths and heights in this gospel, the salvation which believers have in common, which have never yet been measured. Jude thought to make this the theme of his epistle. Then something happened. The power which was to guide his pen constrained him to write about something else. The Holy Spirit constrained him to exhort Christians to contend earnestly for the faith once and for all delivered unto the saints. Here is a very fine illustration at the close of the New Testament of how the Word of God was given. Jude had a desire to write about the common salvation; but the Holy Spirit wanted him to write about something else and He constrained him to do so, not in his own words but in words given by God.

What faith is meant? Not a creed or confession of faith as formulated by a denomination, sect or party, but the faith, which has been delivered once for all unto the saints. It is the same faith concerning which our Lord asked the question, "Nevertheless when the Son of Man cometh, shall He find the faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8) It is the faith revealed in the Word of God. The heart of that faith is the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, and the apostles' doctrine made known by the Holy Spirit; it is therefore the whole body of revealed truth. This faith is given by revelation, a different thing from what is being taught today, as if this faith were the product of a process of evolution through the religious experiences of the race for thousands of years. The truths which man needs cannot be found by searching. This faith is "once for all delivered unto the saints." It is permanent, irrevocable and like Him who has revealed it, unchanging. Nor is this faith delivered to the world, but to the saints, that is to the body of Christ, the Church.

That faith was being corrupted when Jude received the commission to exhort Christians to contend earnestly for it. They were ungodly men, having taken on the Christian profession without possessing the reality of it. The evil they introduced was twofold. They turned the grace of God into lasciviousness and they denied the rights of Christ to be Lord and Master. They professed to believe in grace, but abused it so that they might indulge in their own lusts; they knew nothing of the power of godliness manifested in holy living and therefore they denied the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ.

### III. EXAMPLES FROM THE PAST

Verses 5-10. The Spirit of God reminds them of certain apostasies in past history and how God in judgment dealt with it. If we compare this section of Jude's Epistle with 2 Peter 2:4-8 we shall see how both documents differ from each other. Peter speaks first of the angels that sinned; then of Noah and the flood and finally of Sodom and Gomorrha and the deliverance of Lot. Jude on the other hand does not mention Noah at all, nor Lot. He speaks first of the Israelites who had come out of Egypt and were destroyed in the wilderness because they believed not. This is followed by the angels who kept not their first estate; then comes Sodom and Gomorrha and the judgment which fell upon these cities, and finally Jude adds something which is not found elsewhere in the Word of God, the

incident about Michael contending with the devil about the body of Moses. It is far fetched with this different testimony which Jude gives to charge him with having copied Peter, or Peter having used Jude.

When we examine these examples of the past, we discover that they are not chronologically arranged. If they were reported according to the time when they happened, Jude, like Peter, should have mentioned first the angels that sinned; after which Sodom and Gomorrha would be in order, followed by the Israelites who fell in the wilderness and after that Michael contending with the devil. Why this unchronological arrangement in this Epistle? There must be a purpose in it. We believe the arrangement is made in the manner as it is to teach us the starting point and the goal of apostasy. It starts with unbelief. The people had been saved out of Egypt, but they believed not and were destroyed in the wilderness, except those mentioned in the Word who believed.

Thus all apostasy starts with unbelief in what God has spoken. The angels which kept not their first estate, who left their own habitation, and who are now chained, are the same angels of whom Peter speaks, those who brought in the corruption described in the opening verses of Genesis 6. They gave up the place assigned to them. This is the next step in the progress of apostasy. Unbelief leads to rebellion against God. Sodom and Gomorrha come next. Here we find the grossest immoralities and going after strange flesh. These vicious things are still in the world, and why are they so prominent in our days? On account of unbelief. Then follows the statement, that these apostates are filthy dreamers who defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities. This is lawlessness. This is the goal of all apostasy. The predicted lawlessness with which this age ends is the fruitage of infidelity. Such is the development of apostasy. Unbelief, rebellion against God and his revealed truth, immorality and anarchy. These steps may be traced in our own times.

To show that Michael, the archangel, would not rail against the fallen angel-prince, now the devil, as these apostates despise dominions, the incident concerning Michael contending against the devil about the body of Moses is introduced. He durst not bring a railing accusation against the former Lucifer, the son of the morning, for Michael still recognized in him the once great and glorious creature. It is stated by some of the early church fathers that this episode was recorded in a Jewish apocryphal book "Assumption of Moses." This book is no longer in existence. Another Jewish tradition has it that Michael had been given the custody of the grave of Moses.

Jude does not quote from tradition, nor does he quote from a source now no longer available, or, as others surmise, used one of Zechariah's visions (chapter 3), but the Holy Spirit revealed unto him what actually took place when Moses had died. It seems that Michael the archangel was commissioned by the Lord to conduct the funeral of Moses (Deut. 34:5-6). Then the devil appeared upon the scene claiming the body of the servant of the Lord, for what purpose is not revealed. (See annotations on Deuteronomy 25.) And Michael durst not bring against him a railing accusation but said, The Lord rebuke thee. But it is different with these apostates. They are compared with irrational animals, following their natural inclinations.

#### IV. A FURTHER DESCRIPTION OF THE APOSTATES

Verses 11-13. The Spirit of God pronounces a woe upon them. The eleventh verse is of much importance. At the close of the New Testament we are reminded of Cain, the first murderer of the human race. Some expositors claim that his name is introduced here because he is a representative of all bad men; others think that he is mentioned because these apostates hated those who are of the truth, as Cain hated Abel. The way of Cain was the way of unbelief. He did not believe what God had spoken, while Abel believed. He had not faith like Abel, who offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous. Cain was a religious man nevertheless, but his religion may be termed a "bloodless religion." He brought the labor of his hands, that which he had gathered from the land upon which the curse rested.

The apostates go in the same way of self-will and in that way they reject the record of God concerning His Son. They have no use for the blood of redemption; the salvation they preach is the salvation of "Do," by character. They rush also greedily after the error of Balaam. Money is the chief object with them. They teach error for reward, knowing all along that their teaching is contrary to the revelation of God. Money, honor and glory from men, self exaltation and self gratification are the leading motives of these men. The third characteristic is the sin of Core (Korah). The sin of Korah was open rebellion and opposition against the authority of God and the priesthood He had instituted. These apostates of the last days manifest the same spirit of rebellion and defiance. They have no use for the Lord Jesus Christ as the appointed mediator, priest and advocate. The perdition of Korah will overtake them likewise.

Not Jude, but the Holy Spirit, denounces them in the strongest language. (See annotations 2 Peter 2.) They are doubly dead, first in their own fallen nature, and in the second place by turning their ears from the truth and going into apostasy. They are like trees which give the promise of fruit in an imposing bloom, but which withers away; they do not yield any fruit whatever. They are plucked up by the roots without any hope of a revival. They are like the wild waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame (Isaiah 62:20-21); wandering stars to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever. The wandering stars in the universe belonged once to some great solar system. They detached themselves and began their wanderings. As they left their center they wandered further and further away, deeper and deeper into the immense space of cold and darkness. So these apostates left the center and became eccentric rushing, like these wandering stars of the heavens, into the outer darkness.

#### V. THE TESTIMONY OF ENOCH

Verses 14-16. The Holy Spirit introduces quite abruptly Enoch, the seventh from Adam. There is a deep spiritual significance in this. Enoch lived as an age was about to close. Before the evil days of Noah, with universal violence, corruption and wickedness, had come, Enoch walked with God and bore a prophetic testimony of what was to come in the future. He suffered on account of the testimony he bore to that generation. The ungodly spoke against him, but he kept on in his walk with God and in his testimony, till the day came when he was suddenly removed from the earth. "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him, for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God" (Hebrews 11:5). Enoch represents prophetically the true Church living at the close of the age, bearing

witness to the coming of the Lord, and waiting in faith for the promised translation. The Spirit of God mentions Enoch for this purpose and for our encouragement.

Much has been made by critics and rationalists about this reference to Enoch. What Jude writes about Enoch is found in a Jewish apocryphal book by the name of "The Book of Enoch." The book consists of supposed revelations which were given to Enoch and to Moses. Its object seems to be a vindication of the ways of providence and to set forth the coming and terrible retribution for sinners. The book was known to the early church fathers who refer to it often in their writings. For centuries it seems to have been lost. About the close of the 18th Century an Ethiopian translation was discovered in Abyssinia and translated into English and German. Critics claim that this book of Enoch was used by Jude, inasmuch as he inserted this reference to Enoch, which is almost verbatim found in that book. But according to these critics the book of Enoch was written in the second century and from this they reason that Jude did not write this Epistle in the year 65 A.D.

But there are other scholars who have ascertained that the book of Enoch was in existence before Christ. Even if the critics were correct that this book was written in the second century of our era, it is no evidence that Jude could not have written his Epistle in the year as stated above. The writers of the book of Enoch might have used Jude's statements about Enoch. The fact that Jude in giving by the Holy Spirit this paragraph concerning Enoch proves the record, whether it was handed down by tradition or written in the book of Enoch, to be true.

#### VI. THE EXHORTATIONS

Verses 17-23. These exhortations are for the people of God, whose lot is cast in these predicted evil days. The first exhortation is to remember the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. To hold fast these words and remember them is the great need in the days of apostasy. Peter bears the same witness (2 Peter 3:1-3). Building yourselves up on your most holy faith is the next exhortation. Nothing else is worth while building up for believers living in the last days. Prayer is needed. But it is not prayer for the Holy Spirit, for another Pentecost, which is nowhere promised, nor for another baptism with the Spirit, but it is prayer in the Spirit. The exhortation "Keep yourselves in the love of God" means to keep oneself in the consciousness in that fellowship with the Father and with the Son of which John speaks in his first epistle, that is enjoying the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life, which means, looking for Himself, for His coming. The final exhortations give instructions as to the believer's attitude towards those who have been led away.

#### VII. THE CONCLUSION

Verses 24-25. "Now unto Him that is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."

Beautiful doxology with which this Epistle ends! His own are being

kept in the evil days with which the age closes. They are the preserved in Jesus Christ kept for Him. And while we wait for Him, He is able to keep us not only from falling, but from stumbling. And then comes that day in which He will present His own, His beloved people, whom He bought by His own precious blood. He will present them faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. And what a day of joy and gladness, as well as of glory, it will be, when He shall see the travail of His soul and will be Satisfied, the day in which He will present to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blame! (Ephesians 5:27)

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