

Tuesday Evening Bible Study
Series #9: 1 Peter, Jude and 2 Peter
Session #4: Jude
Tuesday, October 10, 2017

Summary

A pastoral leader in the early church delivers a constructive but firm warning to a community under his care to be prepared and vigilant in confronting false teachers. Selfish in their motivations, distorters of sound doctrine, and immoral in character, these teachers are to be vigorously opposed and resisted, rather than listened to or welcomed. Vivid examples of similar challenges from the past are cited from both canonical and non-canonical literature, with the aim of providing models of constancy, faithfulness, and resilience within the community. The author lifts up the love, mercy, and steadfastness of God as a foundation for hope and celebration.

Who wrote it and when?

The epistle is attributed to Jude (Judas in Greek), one of the brothers of Jesus (see Mark 6:3), although the exact relationship has been disputed for centuries. English biblical tradition renders his name “Jude,” so as to avoid confusion with Judas Iscariot. He was considered to be a prominent leader of the early Jewish-Christian movement in Palestine. The exact date of the writing of Jude is uncertain, in part because the authorship itself is uncertain. Arguments in favor of its having been written by the brother of Jesus include the author’s familiarity with the Hebrew scriptures as well as some non-canonical writings that were prominent at the time (*1 Enoch*, *The Assumption of Moses*), familiarity with Jewish traditions, his authority as a member of the family of Jesus, and his apocalyptic outlook. That would date the book as early as the 50s CE; however, scholars still contend that it was written via a scribe, due to the rich vocabulary and polished Greek, which would have been unexpected from a 1st Century Galilean Jew, whose primary language was Aramaic. Arguments against the letter having been written by Jude himself include, again, the high-level of Greek vocabulary and style, formulaic expressions about Jesus (“our Lord Jesus Christ”), references asking the reader “to remember,” and the use of a doxology to conclude the letter. These latter features push the date to the end of the 1st Century, beyond the lifetime of a brother of Jesus.

What is the context in which it was written?

The letter is not clearly addressed to a particular Christian community. Nevertheless, an early Christian community receives an urgent warning to be on its guard against false teachers, to heed the warnings and examples from the past, and to rely on the grace and steadfastness of God to prevail against falsehood and immorality.

How do I read 1 Peter?

As with any correspondence, in reading a New Testament letter we are being permitted a glimpse into someone else's life, times, and circumstances. We have no way of knowing whether this letter constitutes part of a longer sequence of correspondence, or whether it stands on its own. Likewise, we are left to wonder how (if at all) the recipients responded to the content of the letter. But we have enough in this short letter to impress

upon us something of the relationship between writer and recipients and the issues at hand for this community in its formative stages.

Outline of Jude

- A. Salutation (vv. 1-2)
- B. Purpose of the Letter (3-4)
- C. Body of the Letter (5-23)
 - a. Judgment on the False Teachers with examples (5-17)
 - b. Final Advice: a strategy for the faithful (17-23)
- D. Doxology (24-25)

Notes

- The opening salutation contains an interesting phrasing (chiastic)
 - “Jude, of Jesus Christ, a slave; brother, on the other hand, of James...”
 - Instead of identifying himself as a brother of Jesus, he calls himself a servant.
- Verse 3: “appeal” – the Greek verb used means “to exhort,” which suggests a stronger sentiment than an appeal. This is a letter of exhortation.
- The main transgression seems to be licentiousness.
- The author quickly utilizes images of Sodom and Gamorrah, cities known for their wickedness and licentiousness—and were, thus, destroyed!
- Then he cites several other OT transgressors:
 - Cain, who killed his brother Abel. (Genesis 4:1-16)
 - Balaam, who gave advice that led Israel into apostasy (Numbers 25:1-4; 31:16)
 - Waterless clouds (Proverbs 25:14)
 - Waves (Isaiah 57:20)
 - Wandering stars mislead those who are guided by them.
- Jude made references to non-canonical writings
 - 1 Enoch 6-19 (sons of God, fallen angels)
 - Assumption of Moses

Question to consider

What can we learn from the Epistle of Jude?

Resources

Notes from HarperCollins Study Bible (NRSV), 1989

“Jude” in *Sacra Pagina*, Daniel J. Harrington, ed. (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2008)

Raymond E. Brown, “Letter of Jude” in *An Introduction to the New Testament* (New York: Doubleday, 1997)

“Jude,” <http://www.enterthebible.org/newtestament.aspx?rid=65>