



Merciful Lord

CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH

Jude 1

Teaching Notes

INTRO

Our study of Jude completes the section of General Epistles. The book of Jude is about being contenders for the faith in the end times. During the end times, people will come creeping in with their own agendas and false doctrine and theology against the teachings of the church. Jude began his epistle saying he wanted to talk about salvation but was more concerned about the threat of false teachers (v. 3).

The title “Jude” is a form of Judas and Judah and was a common name in the first century. Scholars agree the author Jude was one of the four half-brothers of Jesus (they shared the same mother).¹ In Matthew 13:55 and Mark 6:3, Jude is listed as Judas.

Jude is the fourth-shortest New Testament book (after 2 John; 3 John; and Philemon). Jude did not quote the Old Testament at all but made nine illustrations to it. MacArthur provides this list of illustrations: (1) to the Exodus (v. 5); (2) to Satan’s rebellion (v. 6); (3) to Sodom and Gomorrah (v. 7); (4) to Moses’ death (v. 9); (5) to Cain (v. 11); (6) to Balaam (v. 11); (7) to Korah (v. 11); (8) to Enoch (v. 14); and (9) to Adam (v. 14).² It is important to note that Jude knew the word of God as he contended for the faith against false teachers.

MacArthur notes, “The doctrinal and moral apostasy discussed by Jude (vv. 4–18) closely parallels that of 2 Peter (2:1–3:4).”³ The book was probably written before the fall of Jerusalem (AD 70), since he made no mention of it, and after 2 Peter (AD 68–70). In 1 Corinthians 9:5, the statement is made that the wives of Jesus’ brothers accompanied them on their missionary trips. Most likely, the book was written in Jerusalem.⁴

Jude originally rejected Jesus as Messiah (John 7:1–9) and was converted with his other brothers after Jesus’ resurrection (Acts 1:14). MacArthur points out that, interestingly, “Clement of Rome (c. AD 96) plus Clement of Alexandria (c. AD 200) also alluded to the authenticity of Jude.”⁵ During Jude’s lifetime, “Christianity was under severe political attack from Rome and aggressive spiritual infiltration from gnostic-like apostates and libertines who sowed abundant seed for a gigantic harvest of doctrinal error. It could be that this was the fore-runner to full-blown Gnosticism which the apostle John would confront over 25 years later in his epistles.”⁶ Jude called the church to take a stand against these false teachings. His book is the only book in the New Testament that was “devoted exclusively to confronting ‘apostasy,’ meaning defection from the true, biblical faith.”⁷

TEACHING

Jude 1-10: Jude appealed for his message to be accepted by aligning himself as a slave of his half-brother Jesus and as a brother of James, the leader of the Jerusalem church. He distinguished himself from the apostles. He acknowledged the responsibility placed on those who are called by God and pointed out that God keeps those He calls safe in Christ Jesus (v. 1). Jude wished that their mercy, peace, and love be multiplied (v. 2). No information is given about his audience except that he addressed them as “dear friends.” Scholars suggest these friends were Jewish Christians since Jude used nine examples from the Old Testament. He encouraged his readers to “contend for the faith.” MacArthur interprets Jude’s words as “to wage war against error in all forms and to fight strenuously for the truth, like a soldier who has been entrusted with a sacred task of guarding a holy treasure.”⁸

John described these false teachers in verse 4 as sneaking in, being ungodly, turning God’s grace into promiscuity, and denying Jesus as Lord. MacArthur lists 18 characteristics of an apostate from verses 4–19: “(1) ungodly—v. 4, (2) morally perverted—v. 4,

¹ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2005), pp. 1978.

² MacArthur, p. 1979.

³ MacArthur, p. 1978.

⁴ MacArthur, p. 1978.

⁵ MacArthur, p. 1978.

⁶ MacArthur, p. 1979.

⁷ MacArthur, p. 1979.

⁸ MacArthur, p. 1980.



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(3) deny Christ–v. 4, (4) defile the flesh–v. 8, (5) rebellious–v. 8, (6) revile holy angels–v. 8, (7) dreamers–v. 10, (8) ignorant–v. 10, (9) corrupted–v. 10, (10) grumblers–v. 16, (11) fault finders–v. 16, (12) self-seeking–v. 16, (13) arrogant speakers–v. 16, (14) flatterers–v. 16, (15) mockers–v. 18, (16) cause division–v. 19, (17) worldly minded–v. 19, (18) without the Spirit–v. 19.”⁹ Be aware of what these people might look and sound like.

Jude used the Exodus to show that God saved His people from Egypt, but some fell away and didn’t believe (v. 5). Jude then mentioned the fallen angels who became unholy and immoral (v. 6), as well as the immorality in the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah (v. 7). Likewise, the false teachers coming against the church “defile their flesh, reject authority, and blaspheme glorious ones” (v. 8).

Jude then referred to the dispute between Michael the archangel and the Devil, over Moses’ body, and said Michael did not use abusive condemnation against him but instead responded, “The Lord rebuke you!” (v. 9) (Zechariah 3:2; Revelation 12:7). MacArthur points out, “Rather than personally cursing such a powerful angel as Satan, Michael deferred to the ultimate, sovereign power of God . . . This is the supreme illustration of how Christians are to deal with Satan and demons. Believers are not to address them, but rather to seek the Lord’s intervening power against them.”¹⁰ On the other hand, the false teachers were blaspheming anything they didn’t understand, destroying themselves in the process (v. 10).

Jude 11–19: Jude pronounced woe upon the false teachers for having traveled in the path of Cain the murderer, abandoning themselves to the error of Balaam for profit, and for the rebellion of the people of Korah (v. 11). One common trait of these apostates is that they pursue their own agendas, regardless of what is true or right in the Lord. John described them as dangerous reefs at the love feasts or communions, who ate with the believers to feed themselves only. They were waterless clouds and bare trees in late autumn—worthless and unproductive (v. 12). They were also wild waves casting up shameful foam of their evil deeds and wandering stars who brought no light to the darkness (v. 13).

Jude stated that Enoch, a man of God, prophesied against these false teachers (Genesis 5:1–24), saying that God would come against them with an army of holy ones to execute judgment on them for their ungodly acts (vv. 14–15). The judgment refers to the second coming. Jude then described them further as discontented grumblers who cared only for their own desires, flattering people to get what they wanted (v. 16). Jude reminded his readers to remember the teachings of the apostles about the end times to help them fight false teachings (vv. 17–18). Because they did not have the Holy Spirit within them, these false teachers created divisions in the church (v. 19).

Jude 20–25: Jude gave specific instructions for fighting these false teachers: build yourselves up in faith; pray in the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 6:18); abide in the love of God; look forward to the promised eternal life; show mercy to those who doubt; save others from false teachings; and hate the garment (the lives of the false teachers) that had been defiled with evil actions (vv. 20–23). Jude ended by blessing his readers through the Lord.

CLOSING

We have to persevere in our faith, holding onto to the Lord Jesus Christ, in order to be contenders for the Word of God against false teachings and apostates.

⁹ MacArthur, p. 1982.

¹⁰ MacArthur, p. 1982.