

The Epistle of Jude, False Teachers: Exposed and Denounced!

Overview: Verses 1-3

Jude's epistle is a tremendous book and just as with all of Scripture, a careful study of it will yield fruit. Unfortunately, many neglect the book because of its overall negative tone which pervades it. However, in the case of false teaching, the negative tone is needed because of the situation. In addition to the denunciation of false teachers, we are treated to seeing the justice of God, ways in which we can cooperate with the Spirit of God, and the lengths we must go to restore those affected by the life and teaching of false teachers.

Authorship (verse 1):

There are six individuals name Jude (Judas in Greek and Judah in Hebrew) in the NT, however two emerge as serious contenders for authorship:

1. Judas, the apostle (Luke 6:16) and it is possible for him to be the author based on the fact that he would have had first-hand teaching from Jesus himself as an apostle.
2. Judas, the brother of Jesus (Matthew 13:55). As the brother of Jesus, he also would be familiar with the teaching of Jesus, perhaps less so than the apostle Judas, but familiar nonetheless.

I believe that the author is Jude, the brother of Jesus for three reasons: 1. The author does not identify himself as an apostle, which doesn't mean that he wasn't, but to a certain degree it is telling. 2. In verse 17, the author intimates that he and the audience received the faith from the apostles and further confirms that he was not an apostle. 3. The author identifies himself as the brother of James, this same James who is well known as the brother of our Lord.

Date:

Most scholars place the date of Jude's epistle between 60-67 A.D.

Purpose (verses 2-3):

Apparently false teachers have crept in the body and are teaching contrary to the doctrine of the apostles. These teachers live lives that are radically incompatible to Christianity. Jude wants his audience to know that they exist and the potential dangers associated with them being in their midst. In addition to "calling things as they are," Jude ensures that the congregation knows that God will deal with the false teachers and levies several responsibilities on his audience.

Special features:

Jude is fond of the number three and it is seen all throughout the epistle. In verse 1, we see the *called, sanctified, and kept* ones. In verse 2, Jude wants us to experience God's *mercy, peace, and love*. In verses 5-7, three examples are used to demonstrate what will happen to the false teachers and they are: *Israelites, Angels, and Sodom & Gomorah*. In verse 8 the men are described as: *defilers of the flesh, rejecters of authority, and speakers of evil*. Lastly, in verse 11 Jude uses three examples to describe the false teachers: *Korah, Baalam, and Cain*.

In addition to triplets, Jude alludes to two non-canonical documents: The Assumption of Moses (verse 9) and The Book of Enoch (verse 6). Jude using these two books does not mean that these materials should be canonical. However, Jude's use of them adds considerable weight to the authenticity of the events described. The Apostle Paul cites from several sources, sources ranging from OT midrashim (I Cor. 10:4) to Greek poets (Tit. 1:12) as well.

False Teachers Described: Verse 4, 8, 10-13

Marked out for destruction (v. 4)...Ungodly (v. 4)...Antinomian (v. 4)...Deniers of God (v. 4)...Defilers of the flesh (v. 8, 10c, 16)...Rejecters of authority (v. 8)...Evil speakers (v. 8)...Greedy (v. 11c)...Spots/rocks/reefs (v. 12)...Selfish (v. 12)...Clouds without water (v. 12)...Trees without fruit and twice dead (v. 12)...Wandering stars (v. 12)...Grumblers (v. 16)...Complainers (v. 16)...Flatterers (v. 16)

False Teachers' Plight: Verses 5-7

Jude provides three examples to illustrate the plight of the false teachers. First up are the Israelites who perished in the wilderness. These are the men and women who perished because they did not continue in the faith (Hebrews 3:19 & 4:2). Secondly, Jude addresses the angels that sinned by leaving their appointed place and entered into areas which were off-limits for them. This particular example is taken from The Book of Enoch, and if true, which I believe it is, greatly helps us as it relates to Genesis 6. The last example comes from Sodom & Gomorrah, the city destroyed for its rampant immorality and perversion of God's image implanted in mankind. Jude's point in using these three examples is: Since God did not spare these people, cities, and angels, as he judged them, then he will also judge the false teachers! He wants his audience to know the outcome of these men.

His Audience's Responsibilities (and ours as well) Verses 17-23

This section is preceded by the phrase "But you, beloved in verse 17 and in verse 20. This section contains many imperatives for us. We are told to REMEMBER what was spoken by the apostles (v. 17), BUILD ourselves up in the faith (v. 20), PRAY in the Holy Spirit (v. 20), KEEP ourselves in the love of God (v. 21), LOOK for the mercy of God (v. 21), HAVE compassion (v. 22), MAKE distinctions (v. 22), SNATCH others from the fire (v. 23), HATE garments stained with sin (v. 23).

These verses have been grouped together into three categories as it relates to our responsibilities:

REMEMBER what has been taught and passed down (verse 17)

MAINTAIN our relationship with God (verses 17-21)

RESCUE others who have been negatively impacted, with wisdom and discernment (verses 22 and 23)