

# Jude • Contending for the Faith

## Introduction

I don't think that's it's pure coincidence that in the ordering of the books in the New Testament, that Jude is the very last book before Revelation. For believers, End Times events have more to do with apostasy, deception, false teachers, and false prophets than anything else. Those who have to deal with the spiritual issues of the Last Days will be the ones contending for the faith against those who will not just outright attack it from without, but try to undermine it from within.

<sup>1</sup>Jude, a bond-servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James,

To those who are the called, beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ:  
<sup>2</sup>May mercy and peace and love be multiplied to you.

### [Read v.1-2]

**Q: Who was Jude and what was his relationship to James? Why did he call himself “the brother of James”?**

A: Matthew 13:55, “Is not this the carpenter’s son? Is not His mother called Mary, and His brothers, James and Joseph and Simon and Judas?”

Jude was a half brother of Jesus, the Bishop of Jerusalem and author of the Epistle of James (not to be confused with the Apostle James, brother of John). James and Jude were true brothers by birth. Mary and Joseph had other children after Jesus was born, Jesus being of virgin birth. He calls himself the brother of James instead of the brother or half brother of Jesus out of respect for Jesus as the Son of God. To call himself the brother of Jesus would infer he, too, had the title of Son of God. Instead, he refers to himself as a “bond-servant of Jesus Christ.”

**Q: In verse 1, what does Jude mean when he says, “kept for Jesus Christ”? (In NIV, it’s “kept by,” but “kept for” is the better translation.)**

A: Jude’s readers are “the called”; that is, by God’s sovereignty He called out some for salvation and is synonymous with the term “Christian.” If God’s sovereignty is great enough to call someone into His kingdom, He is also able to keep them from being snatched away by Satan until the day of Christ’s return.

**Application:** How important is it to believe that you, as a Christian, are part of “the called”? (It’s important because it gives us confidence to know that Satan cannot take us away from God and that we cannot lose our salvation.)

<sup>3</sup>Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints. <sup>4</sup>For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. <sup>5</sup>Now I desire to remind you, though you know all things once for all, that the Lord, after saving a people out of the land of Egypt, subsequently destroyed those who did not believe. <sup>6</sup>And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of

### [Read v.3-7]

**Q: What did Jude want to write about, and what events precipitated his changing the theme of his letter?**

A: Jude intended to write a treatise on salvation. However, circumstances required him to deal with the issue of false teachers.

**Q: In verse 3, what is the meaning of the phrase, “contend...for the faith,” and what is the nature of the faith for which they are to contend?**

A: The word “contend” means “to struggle.” (It forms the basis for our word “agonize over.”) “The basic meaning of the word is that of the intense effort in a wrestling match.... The verb form is a present infinitive, showing that the Christian struggle (for the faith) is to be continuous” (Expositor’s Bible Commentary, p. 388). The nature of the faith is described as “once for all handed down to the saints.” “The faith is the body of truth that very early in the church’s history took on a definite form.... Basically, the Christian faith cannot be changed; its foundation truths are not negotiable. (See Gal. 1:6-9).”

the great day, <sup>7</sup>just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they in the same way as these indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh, are exhibited as an example in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire.

*"I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!"*

–Galatians 1:6-9

**Application:** How do you “struggle” for the faith today, and in what ways do you prepare (get in shape, practice) to contend for the faith? What are you doing for your children?

**Q: Again, referring to verse 3, can the basic Christian faith be added to or subtracted from? What are some common denominations (religions) that have done exactly that?**

A: SDA (writings of Ellen White), Mormons (writings of Joseph Smith), Roman Catholicism (Papal decrees), Jehovah's Witnesses (New World translation), to take only an obvious few.

**Q: What are seven characteristics of those against whom the faith must be contended? (v. 4)**

1. **certain persons.** Most likely a few individuals, male and/or female.
2. **have crept in.** The meaning is this: someone who entered into a crowded room through a side door and is circulating among the guests.
3. **unnoticed.** Unnoticed that he or she doesn't have an invitation. Also, not working out in the open but behind the scenes, stealthily, garnering support and gaining followers by talking to individuals one-on-one.
4. **marked for this condemnation.** Most likely refers to God's preordained judgment upon the ungodly.
5. **ungodly persons.** Specifically, they are not Christians even though they say they are or think they are and sometimes appear to others to be. They are not of God, and certainly not part of “the called.”
6. **turn the grace of God.** They reinterpret “grace” to a position of “antinomianism”; that is, freedom to do whatever they please and satisfy the desires of the flesh in the name of grace.
7. **deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.** Could be outright denial of either the full deity or the full humanity of Christ (typical of Gnosticism), or could be that their actions and teachings are tantamount to denying Christ.

**Application:** How does the Christian “contend for the faith” against such ideologies, theologies, philosophies?

**Q: What are the consequences for those who follow these false teachers, and what 3 examples from the OT does Jude use to make his point?**

A: The consequence is destruction, either by death here on earth and/or by judgment at the second coming of Christ. The 3 examples are:

- Those Israelites who died in the wilderness because of their failure to believe the report of the spies (v. 5; cf. Numb. 13)
- The banishment of angels (v. 6; cf. Gen. 6:1-4)
- Sodom and Gomorrah (v. 7; Gen. 19:24)

The consequences are twofold. First, there is a “condemnation” waiting for the false teachers which has been ordained since before time, and there are earthly consequences for those Christians who follow these false teachers. Jude’s warning is to fight against the false teaching in order to save Christians from straying from the flock.

***Application:*** *What is the best way for the church – that is, the body of believers – to contend for the faith and work to prevent its own flock from straying? What is the role of pastors? What is the role of elders? What is the role of members?*

***Application:*** *Apply the proverb, “You can lead a horse to water but you can’t make it drink”?*

***Application:*** *Discuss some of the controversial teachings that are going on in “Christian” churches today.*

**[Read v.17-19]**

**Q: Whose warnings are quoted by Jude?**

A: The apostles. This letter is most likely written after the publication of many of the other Apostle’s writings that now make up the New Testament and of which those to whom Jude is writing are familiar. In fact, the quote in v.18 is almost word for word from 2 Peter 3:3. This is yet another reinforcement of the most common teaching concerning the End Times, false teachers and apostasy.

**[Read v.20-23]**

**Q: What are the 4 main things we’re encouraged to do that contrast us to false believers?**

1. *“...building yourselves up on your most holy faith...”*
2. *“...praying in the Holy Spirit...”*
3. *“...keep yourselves in the love of God...”*
4. *“...waiting anxiously for...eternal life...”*

**Q: For those that are successful at “building” and “keeping” as described in v.20-21, what will be an additional visible proof of their contention for the faith?**

A: They will increase the kingdom of God by bringing in others and rescuing those in the balance between.

- ***“...have mercy on some, who are doubting...”*** This is building up and caring for weaker believers who need us to reinforce their faith so as not to fall.
- ***“...save others, snatching them out of the fire...”*** This is winning unbelievers to Christ, who were previously on the path to hell.
- ***“...on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh...”*** These are those that have compromised to such a large degree that we need to be careful that in the process of ministering to them, we ourselves don’t become influenced and fall with them.

*[Continued on next page.]*

<sup>17</sup>But you, beloved, ought to remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>18</sup>that they were saying to you, “In the last time there will be mockers, following after their own ungodly lusts.” <sup>19</sup>These are the ones who cause divisions, worldly-minded, devoid of the Spirit.

<sup>20</sup>But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, <sup>21</sup>keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life. <sup>22</sup>And have mercy on some, who are doubting; <sup>23</sup>save others, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh.

<sup>24</sup>Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, <sup>25</sup>to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

**Q: What does “the garment polluted by the flesh” mean?**

A: Old Testament law held that anyone who defiles their self—comes into contact with something polluted or unholy—and even anyone else touching them were themselves excluded and unclean until purified. The symbol of being spiritually “pure” or “polluted” is most often represented by the condition of one’s clothes, as to whether they’re pure and clean or “dirty rags”. In this case, we have to recognize when someone has given themselves over to false doctrine/teaching that they are more than merely “backslidden”—they are defiled and a potential instrument that can defile and unduly influence us. Our approach to attempt to reach them is different—even limited—as compared to the first 2 conditions, but not impossible.

**Application:** *Who, in your life, comes to mind that may fit in one of these categories: Weak believer, non-believer, deceived believer? What are you to do about it?*

**[Read v.24-25]**

**Q: In summary what are the 2 qualities in God which Jude is seeking for those who contend for the faith?**

A: “...keep...from stumbling...” and to “...stand in the presence of His glory blameless...”

**Q: When does he hope these will happen? What’s the timing difference between these 2 things for those that successfully contend?**

A: For this present life, that we will not stumble. Consistency in this life will then produce the eternal benefit that when we come to stand in His presence, we will therefore be found blameless.