

INTRODUCTION TO 65TH BIBLEBOOK

THE LETTER OF JUDE (ABOUT 68 A.D.)

A. The writer of the Letter of Jude	1
B. The recipients of the Letter of Jude	1
C. The Letter makes use of Jewish Apocryphal Literature	1
D. The date of writing Jude	1
E. The purpose of writing Jude	2
F. The division of the Letter of Jude	2
G. The main messages of the Letter of Jude	3

A. THE WRITER OF THE LETTER OF JUDE.

Jude is not the apostle Judas, son of James¹, called Thaddaeus² elsewhere, because he would hardly write the words “the apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ” (17)!

He is Jude, the younger brother of Jesus as to his human nature, James, Joseph and Simon³. In the beginning, he and his older brothers refused to believe in Jesus Christ⁴. However, after James became a believer, probably when Jesus appeared to him after his resurrection⁵, he too became a believer. He, his mother, Mary, and his brothers worshipped together with the apostles and about 120 other believers before the Day of Pentecost⁶. Like his other brothers, he was married and travelled round in service of the Gospel⁷. In this letter he calls himself “a servant of Jesus Christ” (1).

Jude 4-19 is paralleled in 2 Peter 2:1-19! Although it is not sure who copied who, it is probably Jude who copied from the second letter of Peter, because the apostle Peter would not quote from an obscure person like Jude. Jude summarises Peter and refers to both biblical and Jewish apocryphal illustrations, something Peter is not doing. Dangers like “false prophets and false teachers who would secretly introduce destructive heresies that even deny Jesus Christ”⁸, foreseen by Peter as in the future, have been present for some time in Jude (4)! Peter, however, is not consistent with the use of his tenses and 2 Peter 2:1-19 speaks of these false teachers as having already begun their work!

B. THE RECIPIENTS OF THE LETTER OF JUDE.

The recipients are “those who have been called, who are loved by God the Father and kept by Jesus Christ (2). They are “dear friends and brothers in the faith” and have the Holy Spirit (19). They are thus Christians. The recipients are probably churches in the area of the churches that received the second letter of Peter.

C. THE LETTER MAKES USE OF JEWISH APOCRYPHAL LITERATURE.

The writer responds to false teachings and warns against those who propagate heretical ideas. He exhorts Christians to hold fast to the apostolic faith. *What is unique in the New Testament is that the writer makes use of Jewish apocryphal literature.* He quotes from ‘the Assumption of Moses’ and ‘the Book of Enoch’ in verse 9 and 15 and possible other apocryphal works in vs 6 and 8. Thus this letter came under suspicion in establishing the New Testament Canon.

But a high degree of inspiration does not preclude the biblical writers from quoting sources outside the Bible. The apostle Paul was acquainted with the Greek and Latin classics and quotes from the astronomical poem, ‘the Phaenomena’, of Aratus of Soloi in Cilicia, c.315-240 B.C.. This was translated into Latin by two illustrious Romans, Cicero and Germanicus. “For in him we live and move and have our being”⁹. Christian being and activity are wholly dependent on their intimate relation and nearness to God, their Creator. This peculiar tenet is shared by Heathen religions, Jews and Christians.

D. THE DATE OF WRITING JUDE.

The Letter of Jude quotes 2 Peter 2:1-19, written in A.D. 64, but does not mention the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. The Letter of Jude was probably written in the late sixties, say A.D. 68.

E. THE PURPOSE OF WRITING JUDE.

In the age Jude lived people were tolerant to truth. They regarded all religions as equally valid aspects of the quest for a supreme being¹⁰. Jude calls Christians to stand up for the faith which is both unique and revealed (3-4). He exposes the danger, the fruitlessness and the final destiny of false teachers (5-16).

¹ Luke 6:16; Acts 1:13

² Mark 3:18; Matthew 10:4

³ Mark 6:3; Matthew 13:55

⁴ John 7:5

⁵ 1 Corinthians 15:7

⁶ Acts 1:12-14

⁷ 1 Corinthians 9:5

⁸ 2 Peter 2:1

⁹ (Acts 17:28)

¹⁰ Like modern Hinduism and New Age

He urges God's people to go on growing in their Christian faith and its expression (20-21), calls them to lose no opportunity to proclaim the Gospel (22-23) and reassures them of God's ability to keep them standing (24).

F. THE DIVISION OF THE LETTER OF JUDE.

Theme. "Stand firm against false teachers."

Jude 1-2. Opening address and Trinitarian greeting:

Jude 3-4. Challenge to hold firm to the faith.

Jude 5-7. Reminders of God's punishment of past disobedience.

Jude 8-13. Denunciation of false teachers.

Jude 14-16. The relevance of Enoch's prophecy.

Jude 17-23. The Christian call to perseverance.

Jude 24-25. Closing commendation and ascription of praise.

F. THE MAIN MESSAGES OF THE LETTER OF JUDE.

Jude 2. Trinitarian greeting: mercy (from the Father), peace (from Christ) and love (from the Spirit).

Jude 3. Challenge to hold firm to the faith. "I urge you to contend for the faith that *was once for all* entrusted to the saints".

Jude 4. The condemnation of the false teachers was written about long ago in the Bible¹¹. As punishment they will be vomited out of the land¹²! Transgressors of unlawful sexual relations must be stoned to death¹³. Their names are listed in heavenly books¹⁴. These godless men have secretly slipped in among Christians. They change the grace of God into a licence for (sexual) immorality¹⁵. They deny Jesus Christ as the only Sovereign (despotés) and Lord (kurios). False teachers make a Christian profession, but deny Jesus Christ in their lives.

Jude 5-7. Reminders of God's punishment of past disobedience. The LORD delivered 'a people' (Israel) from slavery in Egypt, but later destroyed those who did not believe¹⁶! *Their status as 'God's people' is no guarantee of salvation!* Likewise the angels that abandoned their God-given tasks are kept imprisoned in hell until the judgment day. Likewise cities like Sodom and Gomorrah that gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion serve as an example of those who will suffer the punishment eternal fire¹⁷.

Jude 8-13. Denunciation of false teachers. These dreamers (of fake news) pollute their own bodies (with sexual immorality), reject the authority (of the Bible) and slander spiritual beings. The archangel Michael is the leader of the heavenly host¹⁸.

The apocryphal book 'Assumption of Moses' tells how the archangel¹⁹ Michael was sent to bury the body of Moses. The devil opposed him, claiming that the body (as a material object) belonged to him. Michael said, "The LORD rebuke you, Satan"²⁰. By instinct (in a natural way) these false teachers do not understand celestial beings or the spiritual dimension of life. Like animals that cannot reason, they have no knowledge of spiritual things, only of physical things. By allowing their physical nature to dominate them (like animals), they are led to their downfall. Biblical examples of the disastrous effects of jealousy, greed and pride are Cain, Balaam and Korah²¹. Their contemporary descendants were jealous of the Christian progress of others, and so they seek to turn them aside to sexual immorality.

Within the Christian fellowship, these people are like 'hidden rocks' (blemishes) that wreck ships. During the love feasts that were regularly held together with the Lord's Supper in the Early Church, the leaders (shepherds) feed themselves and not the flock²². Jude compares them with trees that fail to bear fruit²³ and are then uprooted, thus 'twice dead': spiritually dead during life and eternally dead when destroyed. They are like the wild waves of the sea that noisily toss about and break on the rocks, but afterwards only leave a deposit of scum and rubbish on the shore.

According to another apocryphal book, the Book of Enoch, they are 'wandering stars'. They claim to be guides, but are themselves off course²⁴. The blackest darkness is forever reserved for them²⁵.

¹¹ in Leviticus 18:6,20,22,23 and Leviticus 20: 10,13,15,19

¹² Leviticus 18:24-29

¹³ Leviticus 20:2,10,13,15

¹⁴ Revelation 20:12

¹⁵ As some modern people do with LHTB.

¹⁶ Hebrews 4:2,6

¹⁷ Revelation 21:8

¹⁸ Rev 12:7

¹⁹ 1 Thessalonians 4:16

²⁰ Zechariah 3:2

²¹ Genesis 4:1-16, Numbers 16:22-24

²² Ezekiel 34:2-10; John 21:15-17; 1 Peter 5:2, cf. 1 Corinthians 11:20-22

²³ Mark 11:12-14; Matthew 7:15-20

²⁴ Luke 6:39

²⁵ 2 Peter 2:4,17

Jude 14-16. The relevance of Enoch's prophecy. Jude quotes a prophecy attributed to Enoch²⁶ in order to confirm the impending and certain punishment of these men. The Book of Enoch was well known in New Testament days and thus relevant in Jude's day. "Thousands upon thousands of his holy ones" refers to the host of angels²⁷. For the Christian it refers to the second coming²⁸. The word 'ungodly' (4x) described their character and behaviour of insolence and disrespect to God. They are "grumblers against God and his ways"²⁹ just like the behaviour of Israel in the wilderness. They are 'faultfinders', blaming God for their lot, because they want to fulfil their own evil desires. They boast about themselves without the right to do so. And they flatter (i.e. admire the appearance of) others for what they can get out of it in return.

Jude 17-23. The Christian call to perseverance. 'Remember' (is the theme in 2 Peter)³⁰. "In the last times"³¹ is the period between the ascension and second coming of Jesus Christ. There will be 'scoffers'³² who follow their own ungodly desires. They divide the church (into 'spiritual' and 'unspiritual') and set themselves up as superior to ordinary Christians. This is what the Gnostics did. On the contrary, they are the worldly/unspiritual ones, because they do not have the Spirit and follow natural instincts³³.

Christians are exhorted to build themselves up in the truths of the Bible and to pray in dependence of the Holy Spirit (20). They should remind themselves constantly that they are God's precious and beloved children (21). They are encouraged to be merciful to those who doubt (22), to snatch others from the fire (of eternal damnation)³⁴ and save them, but to hate corrupted flesh', that is, bodies polluted by sin (23).

Jude 24-25. Closing commendation and ascription of praise. Use verse 24 as a doxology. "To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy" (24).

SUPPLEMENT. JEWISH APOCRYPHAL LITERATURE

The Assumption of Moses is a 1st century Jewish apocryphal and pseudepigraphal work. It purports to contain secret prophecies Moses revealed to Joshua before passing leadership of the Israelites to him.

The book of 1 Enoch (Ethiopian Enoch) (end 2nd century B.C. or beginning of 1st century B.C.).

a. In Genesis 5:24 two important things are written about Enoch: "Enoch walked with God"; "then he was no more, because God took him away" (from the earth so that he did not experience death)(Hebrews 11:5).

b. In the period between the Old Testament and the New Testament, Enoch became a popular figure and several *legends* about him came into existence. It is possible that the legend about Enoch was extended during the Babylonian exile (587-538 B.C.) to counter-balance the Babylonian legends of the period before the flood. This Enoch lived long before the flood and he became the first man who received heavenly revelations about the mysteries of the universe. He became the inventor of mathematics, writing and astrology. And allegedly he recorded his revelations and delivered them to be passed on to later generations.

c. In the early traditions (from the 5th century B.C.) especially Enoch's scientific knowledge is prominent: teachings in astronomy, cosmology and meteorology. Enoch gained this knowledge by travelling with angels as guides through the universe. Enoch also invented the sun-calendar, which was also used in the Qumran fellowship. Enoch was God's prophet against the fallen angels.

d. Later traditions (2nd century B.C.) lay the emphasis on Enoch's ethical teachings and especially on his apocalyptic revelations about the course of the history of the world until the final judgement!

e. At the end of the 2nd century B.C. or in the beginning of the 1st century B.C. these legendary materials were compiled into the book of Enoch. The book of Enoch is very important to understand the views of the Jews at that time. The book has been preserved only in an Ethiopian translation, some parts in Greek and some fragments in Hebrew (Qumran).

f. The book 1 Enoch is actually a compendium of writings that originated between the 5th century B.C. and the 1st century A.D. and consists of five books:

i) Book of watchmen (1 Enoch 1-36) (middle 3rd century to 1st century B.C.); (1 Enoch 6-19 is also 5th century B.C.) A vision of Enoch about the future judgement of especially fallen angels.

ii) Parables (Similitudes) (1 Enoch 37-71) (not earlier than 1st century A.D. A Jewish product). Three parables about the judgement of the world and assurance of salvation for those who hope in the Messiah. The emphasis lies on the *transcendental, supernatural eschatology* without exclusion of earthly national aspects. Enoch is even identified with the Messianic Son of Man (71:14-17).

iii) Book of astronomy (1 Enoch 72-82) (perhaps 5th century B.C.)

iv) Book of dreams (1 Enoch 83- 90) (165/164 B.C.). A vision about the flood. A second vision about the history of the world up to the Messianic era.

v) Letter of Enoch (1 Enoch 91-105) (end 2nd century B.C.) The most important part is the Apocalypse of Weeks (1 Enoch 91,93) in which the history of the world is divided into 10 weeks of which the last 3 weeks are apocalyptic: *the 8th week represents the Messianic period; the 9th and 10th week bring the final judgement; and the new creation begins at the end of the 10th week!*

Book of Giants (end 2nd century B.C.), fragments found in Qumran, were probably the original 5th book, but were replaced by the Similitudes.

g. The New Testament book of Jude, verse 14-15, is a quotation from 1 Enoch. Many early Christian apocalyptic writings expected that Enoch would return together with Elijah to the earth before the end of history.

Sources:

Christelijke Encyclopaedie, Vol 2, Prof. Dr. G. Ch. Aalders, p 551

²⁶ "Enoch seventh from Adam". cf. Genesis 5:1-18

²⁷ Deuteronomy 33:2; Zechariah 14:5

²⁸ Matthew 25:31; 2 Thessalonians 1:7

²⁹ Exodus 16: 2-12; 17:3; 1 Corinthians 10:10

³⁰ 2 Peter 1:12-14; 3:2,5

³¹ 1 Peter 1:20

³² 2 Peter 3:3-4; Acts 20:29-30; 1 Timothy 4: 1-3; 2 Timothy 3:1-9; Matthew 24:23-25

³³ 1 Corinthians 2:14-16

³⁴ Zechariah 3:2; Amos 4:11

The book 2 Enoch (Slavonic Enoch or the Secrets of Enoch) (end 1st century A.D.)

A late Christian writing that included Jewish material. It contains the journey of Enoch through the 7 heavens, revelations to Enoch about the creation and the history of mankind and his exhortations to his children. It describes the periods of the world, *among other the Messianic kingdom. The transcendental vision dominates. The emphasis is on the transcendental, supernatural eschatology without exclusion of the earthly national aspects. Yet, for the first time the Messianic kingdom is limited to 1000 years!*

Source:

New Bible Dictionary, Intervarsity Press, 1994, Pseudepigrapha, p 997

See other apocryphal literature in

www.biblebooks.site.

66 Revelation (2008) last-biblebook.

Supplement 4. Dispensational or covenant theology, part 3.