

Jude in One Lesson

(Expository Lesson on the Letter of Jude)

I. Background for This Lesson

- a. Jude is a very short letter, just one chapter. It is similar in many ways to **2 Peter**, which we studied together about two years ago (spring 2021).
- b. Why this letter was written.
 - i. The core message of the letter is a warning against bad people who will infiltrate the church.
- c. **Jude** draws on many sources, from the Old Testament, the New Testament and even from other ancient Jewish writings, to illustrate the points he is making. He also uses some very colorful, unforgettable illustrations!
- d. This is a rich letter that I believe holds some very useful gems that can help us today.
- e. About the author.
 - i. The name 'Jude' is, in Greek, the same name as:
 1. Judah, the fourth son of Jacob; and
 2. Judas, the apostle who betrayed Jesus.
 - ii. It says that this 'Jude' or 'Judas' was a brother of James.
 1. James was well known as the leader of the church in Jerusalem, as discussed in **Acts**.
 2. James and Jude are both mentioned as being brothers or relatives of Jesus.
 - a. "Is this not the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary? And His brothers James, Joses, Simon, and Judas?" (**Matthew 13:55**, NKJV)

II. Some Questions to Ask of the Text

- a. From *How to Read a Book: The Classic Guide to Intelligent Reading*, by Mortimer Adler and Charles Van Doren, some keys to approaching a text to get the most out of it include:
 - i. Why did the author write the book? Who is his primary intended audience?

- ii. What is the main point the author is making in the text? What evidence and logic does he employ to support his main point?
- iii. How does this text relate to other, similar works? (Syntopical reading)
- iv. As an *active reader*, what questions come to mind that you would like to ask of the text (and author) as you are reading? How can you then find the answers to those questions?
 - 1. This is hard work, especially since after you ask the questions, *you need to do the digging* yourself, to find the answers from within the text!
- b. Since this is a relatively short text with one main point, this should not be too hard to tackle. However, the author takes a few unusual turns in the text that should raise some interesting questions.
 - i. In exploring those questions, we can learn a great deal.

III. Overview of the Letter

- a. Read the entire letter of **Jude**.
- b. **Opening Questions:** What is the main point of the letter? To whom was it written, and why?
 - i. It was written to Christians in the first century who had a fairly good knowledge of the Old Testament, who were also familiar with the teachings of the apostles (likely in written form via their letters, but perhaps also through hearing them teach in person).
 - ii. The author assumes that his primary intended audience also would be familiar with two other ancient Jewish works, which he quotes or alludes to in this letter: *the Book of Enoch* and the *Assumption of Moses*. Perhaps many of them were from a Jewish background. (We can't say for sure.)
 - iii. The problem: Wicked people were creeping into the church, and Jude wrote this letter to warn the Christians about them.
 - iv. In my opinion, the main point of the letter is captured in **Jude v. 3-4**.
 - 1. "Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God

into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.” (**Jude 3–4**, NKJV)

2. *Wicked men had crept into the church*, and Jude was warning the people about them. These are ungodly people who present a danger to the entire church.
3. In the face of this challenge, Jude exhorts the Christians to “contend earnestly” to hold on to the original faith handed down by the apostles, the faith “once for all delivered to the saints”.

IV. The Faith “Once for All Delivered”

- a. Most modern translations I looked at (including NKJV) translate this as “once for all”. However, a few others, such as King James Version, translate it simply as “once”.
 - i. The Greek word used here (hapax / ἅπαξ) means “once” or “just once”.
- b. The idea is that the faith was handed down once, complete, through the apostles who were inspired by the Holy Spirit. No one can change it, either by adding to it or deleting anything from it.
- c. Key Scriptures that support this concept include:
 - i. “These things I have spoken to you while being present with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, *He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.*” (**John 14:25–26**, NKJV)
 1. We can be confident about the accuracy of the Scriptures based on this promise of Jesus. He said that the Holy Spirit would remind them of everything he had said and would teach them “all things”.
 2. The “you” in this particular statement refers to *the twelve apostles*. It does not apply to every Christian who will live in the future!
 - ii. “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, *He will guide you into all truth....*” (**John 16:12–13**, NKJV)
 1. Since the Holy Spirit would guide the apostles into “all truth”, there would be nothing more, in terms of the faith, that

would be revealed to future generations of disciples. The apostles would receive the full deposit of the faith.

- iii. “But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.” (**Galatians 1:8-9**, NKJV)
 - iv. “O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge—” (**1 Timothy 6:20**, NKJV)
 - v. “And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.” (**2 Timothy 2:2**, NKJV)
- d. The concept of preserving the apostolic faith includes:
- i. The faith was handed down complete to the apostles by the Holy Spirit, as Jesus said in **John 14-16**. They were given “all truth” regarding the Christian faith and doctrine.
 - 1. **Question:** If a glass is *full* (of water, for example), can someone add anything more into it?
 - a. **Answer:** No!
 - 2. No more would be added later on. The Christian faith is not something that would develop over time. The Holy Spirit would not be adding ‘system updates’, unlike computer software companies.
 - 3. Not even Paul the apostle, nor an angel, could change the gospel originally handed down.
 - ii. The job of the church is to *guard the original faith* that was handed down to the apostles and then to hand that down to future generations.
 - iii. If we find ourselves to be in an age or a church where portions of the original gospel have been lost or discarded, our mission is to restore that original apostolic faith first, and then hand it down.
 - 1. That is what it means to “earnestly contend for the faith once for all entrusted to the saints”.
- e. Early Christian writers commented on this foundational concept of the ‘apostolic faith’.

- i. Irenaeus was bishop of the church in Lyons, who, in his youth, had learned from Polycarp (Polycarp had been a direct disciple of the apostle John). From Irenaeus, writing c. 180 AD:
 1. “We have learned from none others the plan of our salvation, than from those through whom the Gospel has come down to us, which they did at one time proclaim in public, and, at a later period, by the will of God, handed down to us in the Scriptures, to be the ground and pillar of our faith. *For it is unlawful to assert that they preached before they possessed ‘perfect [= complete] knowledge,’ as some do even venture to say, boasting themselves as improvers of the apostles.* For, after our Lord rose from the dead, [the apostles] were invested with power from on high when the Holy Spirit came down [upon them], were filled from all [His gifts], and had perfect knowledge: they departed to the ends of the earth, preaching the glad tidings of the good things [sent] from God to us....”
 - a. (Source: Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, book 3, chapter 1; found in Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 1, p. 414)
 2. “True knowledge is [that which consists in] the doctrine of the apostles, and the ancient constitution of the Church throughout all the world, and the distinctive manifestation of the body of Christ according to the successions of the bishops, by which they have handed down that Church which exists in every place, and has come even unto us, being guarded and preserved, without any forging of Scriptures, by *a very complete system of doctrine, and neither receiving addition nor [suffering] curtailment [in the truths which she believes];* and [it consists in] reading [the word of God] without falsification, and a lawful and diligent exposition in harmony with the Scriptures, both without danger and without blasphemy; and [above all, it consists in] the pre-eminent gift of love, which is more precious than knowledge, more glorious than prophecy, and which excels all the other gifts [of God].”
 - a. (Source: Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, book 4, chapter 33; found in Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 1, p. 508)
- ii. From Tertullian, writing c. 197 AD:
 1. “In the Lord’s apostles we possess our authority; for even they did not of themselves choose to introduce anything, but faithfully delivered to the nations (of mankind) the doctrine

which they had received from Christ. If, therefore, even ‘an angel from heaven should preach any other gospel’ (than theirs, **Galatians 1:8**), he would be called accursed by us.”

- a. (Source: Tertullian, *The Prescription Against Heretics*, chapter 6; found in Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 3, p. 246)
2. “They [the heretics] usually tell us that the apostles did not know all things: (but herein) they are impelled by the same madness, whereby they turn round to the very opposite point, and declare that the apostles certainly knew all things, but did not deliver all things to all persons,—in either case exposing Christ to blame for having sent forth apostles who had either too much ignorance, or too little simplicity. What man, then, of sound mind can possibly suppose that they were ignorant of anything, whom the Lord ordained to be masters (or teachers)...?”
 - a. (Source: Tertullian, *The Prescription Against Heretics*, chapter 22; found in Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 3, p. 253)
- iii. From Polycarp (69-156 AD), bishop of Smyrna, who had been a disciple of the apostle John, writing c. 135 AD:
 1. “...and whoever twists the sayings of the Lord to suit his own sinful desires and claims that there is neither resurrection nor judgment – well, that person is the firstborn of Satan. Therefore, let us leave behind the worthless speculation of the crowd and their false teachings and *let us return to the word delivered to us in the beginning....*”
 - a. (Source: Polycarp, *Letter to the Philippians*, chapter 7; found in *The Apostolic Fathers*, ed. Michael Holmes)
 - b. The wording he uses here regarding returning to “the word delivered to us in the beginning” reminds me of the statement in **Jude v. 3**.
- f. Practical applications for us.
 - i. Some brothers in our church fellowship recently asked for a review of the basic doctrine we hold to, especially so that we will stay unified if/when we move to multiple house churches for meeting and teaching.
 1. This is it, essentially. We must simply “contend for the faith entrusted once for all to the saints”, the faith originally handed down by the apostles.

2. We want to restore and hold to the historic faith, the one delivered in the beginning.
- ii. While the historic faith is simple, it is not necessarily easy to follow!
 - iii. The Scriptures are the infallible standard. Period, 'full stop'. However, an interpretation or application that cannot be traced back to those taught by the apostles is likely an innovation.
 1. We don't want to improve on what was handed down originally. Simply restore and guard it.
 2. Any doctrine or application that first appears in the 1800s or 1900s, 600s or 1500s... should be rejected out of hand.
 3. Doctrine does not develop over time. The Spirit did not give the church more info later.
 4. Signs in front of some local churches today that say things like, "God is still speaking..." or "Don't put a period where God has placed a comma". They are generally using this as a cover for superseding unpopular commands of God that are "out of season".
 5. We cannot come up with teachings that were not handed down by the apostles and unknown by the historic church regarding things such as:
 - a. Conversion/baptism,
 - b. Leadership roles in the church,
 - c. Divorce/remarriage,
 - d. Church discipline, addressing sin, and
 - e. Roles of men and women in the church.

V. Evil Men Have Crept into the Church

- a. One of the things that has wrecked the faith of many is discovering wicked people and hypocrites in the church, especially in teaching or leadership roles.
 - i. Most people think that things like that only happen in 'other churches', especially those churches that teach incorrect theology.
 - ii. However, Jesus and the apostles warned us about this repeatedly. Wicked people will sneak into the church. Satan will sow tares among

the wheat. The dragnet that is the kingdom of God will have some bad fish in it. (See **Matthew 13:47-50**.)

- iii. However, we are not to worry. We have seen this pattern throughout spiritual history, from the beginning.
 - iv. Also, God will handle those people at the end. No one will ‘get away’ with anything!
- b. Consider the sources Jude calls on in warning us that wicked people will come into the church.
- i. **Jude v. 5** – Those ‘saved’ from Egypt who were later destroyed (**Exodus, Numbers**)
 - 1. Note that this demolishes the popular Protestant teaching of unconditional eternal security (a/k/a ‘once saved/ always saved’) in a single verse!
 - ii. **Jude v. 6** – Angels who did not keep their proper domain, kept in chains for judgment on the Last Day (*Book of Enoch*, regarding angels sinning at the Flood; more on that later).
 - 1. Also consider: “For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment....” (**2 Peter 2:4**, NKJV)
 - iii. **Jude v. 7** – Sodom and Gomorrah – gone after sexual immorality and “strange flesh” (**Genesis 19**).
 - 1. There is tremendous pressure on churches to cave to culture regarding homosexual immorality. This is likely to increase, leading to persecution in the US.
 - 2. **Question:** What *New Testament* passages can you think of that condemn this sin, specifically?
 - a. **Jude v. 7** (the current passage)
 - b. **Romans 1:26-27**
 - i. “For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and

receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.” (**Romans 1:26–27**, NKJV)

c. **1 Corinthians 6:9-11**

- i. “Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.” (**1 Corinthians 6:9–11**, NKJV)
 - ii. Note that in Achaia, in Greece (where Corinth was located), sexual sins such as adultery, fornication, homosexual relations all were considered acceptable behavior within the general culture.
 - iii. We don’t need to look down on people involved in the sin of homosexuality. This is one of many serious sins that people need to repent of. We simply want to address all sin, and call all people to repent.
 - iv. Note that God’s command to repent of homosexuality *was just as counter-cultural in the first century in Corinth* as it is in our own culture, today!
3. An early application of this New Testament teaching can be found in *The Letter of Polycarp to the Philippians*, written c. 135 AD.
- a. “Similarly, the younger men must be blameless in all things; they should be concerned about purity above all, reining themselves away from all evil. For it is good to be cut off from the sinful desires in the world, because every sinful desire wages war against the spirit, and neither fornicators nor men who have sex with men (whether as the passive or active partner) will inherit the kingdom of God, nor will those who do perverse things. Therefore, one must keep away from all these things and be obedient to the presbyters and deacons as

to God and Christ. The young women must maintain a pure and blameless conscience.”

- i. (Source: Polycarp, *Letter of Polycarp to the Philippians*, chapter 5.3; found in *The Apostolic Fathers*, ed. Michael Holmes)
- iv. **Jude v. 9** – Michael disputing with the devil over the body of Moses? What is that referring to?
1. All we know from Scripture about the body of Moses after his death is that no one knew where it was buried. (**Deuteronomy 34:5-6**)
 2. A few early Christian writers attribute this to an early Jewish work, *The Assumption of Moses* (sometimes referred to as *Testament of Moses*).
 - a. Unfortunately, it appears that the fragments of this work that remain do not cover the part that **Jude** referred to. However, that lost part is quoted or alluded to by other ancient writers, including some early Christian writers.
 - i. See Clement of Alexandria, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers* vol. 2, pp. 335, 511 and 573; and Origen, in vol. 4, p. 328.
 3. The point is that these people disrespect authority, while even Michael the archangel was respectful toward the devil.
- v. **Jude v. 11** – “The error of Cain”: He was *religious* (offered a sacrifice to the Lord) but had a *wicked heart*. (**Genesis 4**)
- vi. **Jude v. 11** – Balaam: corruption for profit (**Numbers 22-24, 31**)
- vii. **Jude v. 11** – Korah: jealous heart leading to rebellion (**Numbers 16**)
- viii. **Jude v. 14-15** – This speaks of the ungodly who were *condemned by Enoch*, who warned that the Lord would come to judge them.
1. **Question:** What does *this* refer to?
 2. Here **Jude** quotes from chapter 2 of the *Book of Enoch* (sometimes referred to as *1 Enoch*).
 - a. The point made by **Jude**: God will judge the wicked people!

3. The *Book of Enoch* has some rather odd or extraordinary things within it. However, that book was treated respectfully by several early Christian writers.
 - a. Personally, I am not quite sure how to consider this unusual book!
 - b. For more on early Christian references to the *Book of Enoch*, see *Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs*, ed. David Bercot; article on 'Enoch, Book of'.
 - c. The *Book of Enoch* tells of angels coming down and having sex with human women prior to the Flood, filling the earth with wickedness. Provides the 'back story' to the Flood.

4. The fact that Jude here is quoting from the *Book of Enoch* does not imply that Enoch is to be considered part of the inspired Scripture. There are several places in the Scriptures where other (non-Scriptural) works are quoted, for example:
 - a. "Now as *Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses...*" (**2 Timothy 3:8**, NKJV)
 - i. This refers to the two sorcerers in Egypt who opposed Moses. Their names are not found in the **Exodus** account but appear in other ancient sources.
 - b. "'...for in Him we live and move and have our being', as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring.'" (**Acts 17:28**, NKJV)
 - i. Here Paul is speaking in Athens and quoting from two Greek poet/philosophers: Epimenides and Aratus.
 - c. Also, recall that we have Caiaphas, the wicked high priest, giving a true prophecy regarding Jesus.
 - i. "And one of them, Caiaphas, being high priest that year, said to them, 'You know nothing at all, nor do you consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish.' Now this he did not say on his own authority; but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation...." (**John 11:49-51**, NKJV)

VI. Colorful Description of the Wicked

- a. The wicked are as spots at their love feasts (agapes).
- b. Lacking any fear of God.
- c. Serving only themselves.
- d. Clouds without water.
 - i. They look good, but nothing of value within them (no water).
- e. Trees without fruit in autumn.
 - i. They look good (like the other fruit trees); but produce no fruit. They are dead.
- f. Waves of sea, foaming up shame.
- g. “Wandering stars” for whom blackness of darkness is reserved forever.
 - i. This reference is in contrast to the passage in **Daniel 12:3**, where it speaks of the righteous who will “shine like stars”.
 - ii. The Greek word for ‘wander’ is the same word we get our English word ‘planet’ from. Therefore, one can visualize these wicked people as being like the planets that appear to ‘wander’ through the night sky, following their own paths and out of sync with all the stars.

VII. Just as the Apostles Warned Us

- a. Read **Jude vv. 16-19**.
- b. Here, Jude points back to warnings given by the other apostles.
- c. **Questions:** Where did the apostles issue similar warnings regarding the “last days”? Also, do the “last days” refer to the end times (the Second Coming and Day of Judgment), or are we in the “last days” now?
 - i. Peter said that the “last days” were already being fulfilled at the Day of Pentecost, in **Acts 2**.
 - 1. “But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: ‘And it shall come to pass *in the last days*, says God, That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your young men shall see visions, Your old men shall dream dreams.” (**Acts 2:16-17**, NKJV)
 - 2. Also, there is a similar indication in **Daniel 2:45** (in the Septuagint) that we are now in the “last days”.

3. Therefore, in one sense, we can make the case that we are now in “the last days”.
 - ii. Warnings from the apostles.
 1. Read **2 Peter 2:1-3**.
 - a. Just as there were false prophets in the past, there will be false teachers among the church.
 - b. They will bring in heresies secretly.
 - c. Many will follow them.
 2. Read **Acts 20:28-31**.
 - a. Some would rise up from among the elders of Ephesus.
 - b. Church leaders are called to be good shepherds. Don't let go of the sheep when the wolf comes. (**John 10, Ezekiel 34**)
 - c. Consider also what Polycarp said regarding Valens, an elder in the Philippian church who went bad. (See *Letter of Polycarp to the Philippians*, chapter 11.)
 3. Read **2 Timothy 3:1-9**.
 - a. Lovers of self
 - i. Loving oneself is not necessarily bad. It is a good to “love oneself”, but only *IF* we are also:
 1. loving God the most of all, and
 2. loving others *AS MUCH AS* we love ourselves.
 - ii. A modern term for those who love themselves above all is: *narcissist*.
 1. This is not a new problem. There have always been people like that!
 - iii. Turn away from these people.

VIII. Conclusions/Summary

- a. Wicked people will come into the church secretly. Jesus and the apostles could not prevent that from happening. We have been warned!

- b. Don't be shocked when you see it. Prepare others, as well.
- c. God will take care of them (punishing the wicked in the end). Ultimately, they will not be able to 'get away' with anything.
- d. Confront them, pray for them, and turn away from them.
- e. Cling to the Scriptures. Let us strive for the faith originally handed down to the apostles, "once for all".