

# JUDE

## INTRODUCTION

Authorship: The author of Jude, according to the signature at the beginning (where all ancient letters were signed) is, “Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James.”

His presentation of himself as “brother of James” has the effect of denying that he was one of the apostles. Furthermore, in the text of the letter, the statement that, “The apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . said to you,” (verses 17-18) has the same effect. It would be very difficult to suppose that an apostle wrote such a statement.

It is, therefore, among the brothers of Jesus, named “James and Joses and Simon and Judas” (Matthew 13:55) that we find the author of this epistle. “Judas” the name being identical with “Jude” as used in the title of this letter. When Jude (Judas) identified himself as “Jude . . . the brother of James,” the identification was definite and complete, James having only one brother named Jude.

This epistle was written by Judas, one of the Lord’s half-brothers, and a brother of the well-known James author of the book of James, and one of the three “pillars” of the church in Jerusalem. Peter and John being the other two, the man who convened the great conference in Jerusalem, who presided at the meetings, and who gave the decision and (probably) wrote the letter summing up their admonitions to the gentile churches.

Neither Jude nor Peter borrowed from the other, as indicated by the following statistics compiled by D. Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 1961, p. 926f, who wrote, “If 2 Peter is the borrower, he changed 70% of Jude’s language and added more of his own. If Jude borrowed from 2 Peter the percentage of alteration is even higher, combined with a reduction in quantity.”

Such findings bury the “borrowing theory” a mile deep. One may only marvel at the attraction which the idea of one New Testament writer “borrowing” from another has for scholars. In the case of close resemblances, the most logical

answer lies in the fact that “both oral and literary processes went on concurrently, for most of the first hundred years of the Christian church.” A. T. Robinson, *Re-dating the New Testament*, p. 346, this being the only explanation needed as to why Jude’s letter is somewhat like a portion of 2 Peter.

Date: The proof of an early date, well before the fall of Jerusalem, is today widely accepted as dependable and authentic.

It begins with the epistle itself. By his identification of himself as “the brother of James,” the author virtually stated by such a declaration that James was living. Thus, the first line of the letter locates it within the life span of James.

Such considerations as these along with many others, enables us with full confidence to accept the date as 61 or 62 A. D.

The Purpose: The great purpose of Jude is stated in verse 3, “Contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.”

Jude, in keeping with the main purpose, reminded his readers of the examples from the Exodus, the angels, Sodom and Gomorrah, Cain, Balaam, and Korah, as warnings against apostasy. His description of the wicked men of his own times is as vivid as any found in the Bible.

The concluding paragraph (verses 17-23) encourages the Christians by the reminder that, after all, such evil men had been foretold by the apostles, and that they were to build themselves up in the holy faith, looking to the blessed influence of the Holy Spirit and the mercy of the Lord. The benediction (verses 24-25) one of the most magnificent concludes the letter.

It was God’s will that this letter be directed against the violent encroachment of paganism upon the holy faith. Nothing could have been more important in Jude’s generation, nor in our own, than the necessity of contending earnestly for the faith once for all delivered to the saints.

## CHAPTER 1

### Verse 1

“James . . .” One of three brothers of Jesus Christ (Matthew 13:55), and therefore, at first, not a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ whom he here acknowledges as his Lord. (John 7:2-5)

“Servant . . .” The word for “servant” here is *doulos*, meaning one “born into slavery,” thus witnessing to the fact of Jude’s being “twice born,” having experienced the new birth.

“And brother of James . . .” This is added by way of identification, and also as the basis of his expecting to be heard. The powerful influence, of course, is that the writer of Jude was not an apostle.

“Called . . .” in the New Testament always has the sense of a call accepted and obeyed.

“Beloved in God . . .” One’s being either “in God” or in “Christ” being automatically equivalent to his being in the other, it is clear that here is another New Testament witness to the conception reaching back to the Lord Himself of the “corporate body” of God’s people.

“And kept for Jesus Christ . . .” David H. Wallace, *Wycliffe Bible Commentary New Testament*, p. 1040, noted that, “The verb here translated kept points toward Christ’s return.”

### Verse 2

Jude’s fondness for triads is evident throughout the letter. In these first two verses we have:

- (1) three names: Jude, Jesus Christ, and James, then
- (2) three forms of relation: servant, Lord (Master), and brother, then
- (3) mercy, peace, and love.

In verses 5-10, we have three examples of apostasy: (verse 4) Israel of the Exodus, the rebel angels, and the citizens of Sodom and Gomorrah. There

follows: (verse 5) a three-fold characterization of the evil men as walking in the ways of Cain, Balaam, and Korah.

“Grace, mercy, and peace . . .” This follows closely the sentiment of Paul’s grace, mercy, and peace.” (2 Timothy 1:2)

### **Verse 3**

“Beloved . . .” The only other example of a New Testament book beginning with this particular word is 3 John 2. As Jude’s subject was a very unpleasant one, he hastens to assure his readers of his affection for them to prevent his strong language from offending them.” (Alfred Plummer, *op. cit.*, p. 508, wrote, “While I was making every effort . . .” means that Jude was actually engaged in writing a treatise on “our common salvation.”

“While I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation . . .” There are no further instructions, but exhortation to heed the truth already received was the great requirement of the day; and Jude accepted the challenge.

“Common salvation . . .” This has the meaning of the salvation which is offered to all men alike, upon the same conditions, from the same source, and entailing the same obligations. This salvation is not common in the sense of being ordinary, being on the other hand the most precious treasure ever made available to the sons of earth.

“Appealing that you contend earnestly . . .” There are very important deductions which are mandatory in such a declaration, the first being the possibility of apostasy. J. B. Mayor, *Expositor’s Greek New Testament*, Vol. V, p. 255, wrote, “It is possible (as shown by the following examples) for spiritual blessings once given to be lost unless we use every effort to maintain them.”

Another deduction is that hostility to the truth exists and will continue to exist throughout history. What is meant is that Christians shall vigorously fight for and defend the truth. William Barclay, *the Letters of John and Jude*, p. 179, pointed out that the Greek word used here, “contains the root of our English

word agony." The defense of the faith may well be a costly thing; but that defense is a duty which falls on every generation of the church."

"For the faith . . ." What is this? James Macknight, Macknight on the Epistles, p. 191, wrote, "It means the sum of that which Christians believe." Delbert R. Rose, *op. cit.*, p. 428, wrote, "It means the sum of that which Christians believe."

David H. Wheaton, *op. cit.*, p. 1275, wrote, "The faith here implies a recognized body of teaching such as we know emerged from Peter's early sermons."

Therefore, N. T. Caton, Commentary on the Epistles of James, Peter, John and Jude, p. 202, is correct in including in the meaning all of the basic New Testament requirements of faith, repentance, confession, and baptism into Christ of all who would be saved initially, and the ethical, moral, and religious obligations of Christians, including their faithful observance of the Lord's Supper, along with the reception and cherishing of the earnest of the Holy Spirit, as necessarily manifested in their subsequent lives.

"Faith" as used here means, "The faith which is believed, not the faith by which we believe." (Delbert R. Rose, a quotation from Alford, *op. cit.*, p.432)

"Once for all delivered to the saints . . ." The use of the Greek word *hapax* carries the meaning of "once only and forever." The gospel delivered to mankind was not a piece meal revelation, "here a littler there a little" as in the Old Testament, but the full message in its entirety and completeness as delivered through Christ to the apostles.

There is hardly any other message of the New Testament that has greater relevance for our own times than this. The revelation of Christ through the apostles is complete, inviolate, sufficient, eternal, immutable, and not subject to any change whatever. Jesus made His sayings to be the dogmatic foundation of Christianity as evident in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 7:24-25) and in the great commission. (Matthew 28:18-20)

People who desire to know God, walk in the light, have eternal life, etc., should heed such passages as 2 John 9, always remembering that the truth was “first spoken by the Lord” (Hebrews 2:3), and that all of those religious doings which cannot pass the test of having been “first” spoken by Jesus Christ should be rejected.

#### Verse 4

“For certain persons have crept in unnoticed . . .” These evil persons were the reason for Jude’s writing this letter. It would appear that such men were apostate Christians, rather than rank outsiders. Alfred Plummer, *op. cit.*, p. 509, wrote, “In New Testament times many of the enemies of the church were an emergence from within, rather than an intrusion from without.”

Delbert R. Rose, *Ibid.*, wrote, “Whatever had been their beginnings, the evil men were at that time “ungodly.” They had corrupted the concept of the grace of God so as to make it a cover for blatant immorality. These heretics are here indicated in four charges:

- (1) they entered secretly,
- (2) they were prophetically consigned to doom,
- (3) they are ungodly, and
- (4) they deny Christ. David H. Wallace, *op. cit.*, p. 18, wrote, “To deny is positively to disbelieve what Christ testified about Himself.”

“Licentiousness . . .” Wallace, *Ibid.* wrote, “This implies Gnostic antinomianism, which connotes sexual debauchery.”

“Who were long beforehand . . .” James Macknight, *op. cit.*, p. 192, explained the meaning of this thus, “Jude means that the Scriptures relating the doom of Sodom, the punishment of angels, etc., whose sins were the same as those of these wicked men, were to be understood as examples of the punishment God would inflict upon them.”

## Verse 5

“Though you know all things once for all . . .” Here again is *hapax*, indicating that the Christian knows the whole message once for all, finally, before he is even converted. The Christian faith is not an exploration, but an acceptance, but not so much after that acceptance a learning as it is a doing. This applies to the “common salvation” and the “faith once for all delivered” rather than to the Old Testament examples Jude was about to cite.

“Saving a people out of the land of Egypt . . .” By bringing up the example of the Israel of the Exodus, Jude taught that, “The goodness of God will not hinder him from punishing the wicked under the new dispensation, any more than it hindered Him from punishing them under the old.” (James Macknight, *op. cit.*, p. 194)

“Destroyed those who did not believe . . .” Here the New Testament habit of using “belief” to cover a whole family of related things is clear enough. The Israelites were destroyed for idolatry in worshipping the golden calf, their fornication with the Midianites, their murmuring and complaining, etc; but all of this is summed up as “they believed not.”

## Verse 6

“Angels who did not keep their own domain . . .” These were the angels of Satan, mentioned by the Savior in Matthew 25:41. That those angels of the devil had indeed rebelled is clear from the fact of their belonging to the devil; and these words are a legitimate statement of such an inference.

“He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment . . .” An apostle of Jesus Christ had already given Jude all the authority he needed for making such a statement as this. Peter said in 2 Peter 2:4, “For if God did not spare angels when they sinned but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness reserved for judgment.”

“Reserved for judgment . . .” This expression occurs in Revelation 6:17, and nowhere else in the New Testament. (Alfred Plummer, *op. cit.*, p. 510) Other

New Testament expressions for the great final occasion are “that day,” “the day of judgment,” and “the day of the Lord.”

### **Verse 7**

“Sodom and Gomorrah . . .” These were the wicked cities whose shameful sin is embalmed in the very name of one of them, a full account of which may be found in Genesis 18 and 19. These are a second illustration drawn from the Old Testament of once privileged people who were destroyed for their wickedness.

“And the cities around them . . .” They were “Admah and Zeboim, the two being mentioned along with Sodom and Gomorrah in Deuteronomy 29:23.

“Just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them . . .” has the meaning that all four of those wicked cities were similarly guilty. They were guilty of “fornication” and the deviations associated with it.

“Undergoing the punishment of eternal fire . . .” That this verse is not a reference to the angels is clear in the distinction of the two punishments. That of the angels was their reservation, “under darkness” until the judgment; that in this verse being the punishment of the wicked cities, is “suffering . . . eternal fire,” a plain reference to the Divine visitation against Sodom and Gomorrah. Such a punishment suggested to Jude the “eternal fire” mentioned by Jesus as the punishment of the wicked, of which the physical destruction of the cities was but a preliminary type of the ultimate overthrow of the wicked in hell.

### **Verse 8**

“Also by dreaming . . .” Any, or all, of a number of things could have been meant by this. “Dreaming, impractical and unrealistic thoughts, visions they had received, Divine revelations they claimed to have had, or simply that, their thoughts, whether awake or asleep, were impure, sensual and evil. Whatever the exact meaning, all of their activity was directed to a single objective, that of defilement, whether self-pollution, or the corruption of others, or both.

“Reject authority . . .” The evil teachers rejected God’s authority. Their sins were threefold: they defile, reject, and revile.



”Reville angelic majesties . . .” There could be a clue in this reference to their speaking evil to angels as to the type of heresy current when Jude wrote. It seems incredible, almost, that any person, no matter how evil, would indulge in blasphemous remarks against the holy angels; and yet evil men today speak evil of the Son of God who is higher in glory and power than any angel.

The theory behind their reviling angels could have been Docetism. Albert E. Barnett, *op. cit.*, p. 328, wrote, “Docetism” holds all angels in contempt because the supposed angels helped God in creating the material universe and that they (the angels) were thereby spiritually defiled.”

### **Verse 9**

William Barclay’s summary of the meaning of this whole verse is excellent, “If the greatest of good angels refused to speak evil of the greatest of evil angels, even in circumstances like that, then surely no human being may speak evil of any angel.”

“Michael the archangel . . .” If Jude had been thinking of the book of Enoch here, he would certainly have written, “Michael one of the archangels, for that book names seven: “Uriel, Raphael, Raguel, Michael, Saragael, Gabriel, and Remiel.” (Albert E. Barnett, *op. cit.*, p. 329)

The word “archangel” occurs only in this verse and in 1Thessalonians 4:16 in the New Testament; and it is quite likely that there is only one archangel, named Michael. Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Bible*, Vol. VI, p. 952, wrote, “There can be properly only one archangel, one chief, or head of all the angelic host.”

What is indicated in Jude’s words here is that there was conflict between Michael and Satan over the body of Moses; we may surmise (and it is only that) that perhaps Satan wanted to use the body for purposes like the worship of relics in succeeding ages. At any rate, the lesson is, THE archangel did not bring a railing accusation against the devil himself, saying, “The Lord rebuke you” (Zechariah 3:2). How strange it is that mortal, weak, ignorant, vile, and sinful men would rail against heavenly things, a thing which the archangel would not do, even though apparently having the right to have done so.

## **Verse 10**

“But these men revile . . .” Fools rush in where the archangel did not dare to go; human stupidity in such conduct reaching some kind of a summit.

“The things which they know by instinct . . .” Far from having any superior wisdom, these licentious Gnostics were totally blind to all of the highest knowledge; and the things which they could not help knowing, such as their passions, they used only for the purpose of sinning.

“They are destroyed . . .” Men engrossed in sensuality are already destroyed; and that present destruction is likewise the prophecy of eternal ruin as well.

## **Verse 11**

Glancing above at the preceding verses, it will be noted that Jude gave three examples of apostasy: the ancient Israelites, the rebel angels, and the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah (verses 5-7). Next he indicated the licentious gnostic heretics as just as guilty as the ancient apostates, emphasizing their sinful and ignorant behavior by contrasting it with the restraint of Michael (verses 8-9), these two verses being somewhat of a parenthetical note. He returned to the indictment of the wicked men in verse 10, but in this (verse 11), he equates and compares their conduct with the wickedness of three of the worst Old Testament apostates: Cain, Balaam, and Korah.

“Cain . . . Balaam . . . Korah . . .” Jude assumed that his readers were thoroughly familiar with the Old Testament events associated with these three names of infamy; and we shall do our readers the courtesy of making the same assumption with regard to them. For those who would like to “brush up a bit,” the narratives of Cain (Genesis 4), Balaam (Numbers 22-24), and Korah (Numbers 16) are among the most interesting records in scripture. Jude’s reason for the choice of these three examples might have been lodged in the spectacular punishments they received. Cain was cursed of God; Balaam was found dead with God’s enemies fighting against Israel, and Korah was swallowed up by an earthquake that split open, the earth taking Korah and all of his company to their death. The lesson is that a grievous punishment will be meted

out to wicked men. Another reason for the selection of these three was also probably that of their sins being similar to the sins of the wicked Gnostics. Like Cain, they were innovators with a fierce hatred of any who rejected their ideas. Like Balaam, they were greedy, covetous, and willing to do nay dishonorable thing whatever for the sake of money. Like Korah, they rebelled against God’s appointed authorities, the sacred apostles, prophets and teachers of the new covenant, just as Korah had rebelled against Moses. Still another possible purpose in using the example of Cain derived from the need to refute the Ophites, called also Cainites.

F. F. Bruce, *Answers to Questions*, p. 134, wrote this on that evil system, “In the early days of Christianity there was one heretical (Gnostic) group which actually venerated Cain and his successors as champions of right, and claimed to be akin to him and to the men of Sodom and Esau and Korah” (as Epiphanius informs us).”

Apparently, all three of these, Cain, Balaam, and Korah were considered to be especially notorious sinners, and frequently referred to as examples and warnings.

### **Verse 12**

“Hidden reefs in your love-feasts . . .” The metaphor appears to be a sunken shoal, or reef, upon which the unwary mariner might suffer shipwreck.

“Love-feasts . . .” The love-feast, mentioned here, John A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament*, p. 172, wrote, “Still appears to be one with the Eucharistic” assembly,” (the Lord’s supper) and therefore not the type which was mentioned by Tertullian as continuing into the fourth century. This, according to Robinson, suggests something near a mid-century date (61-62 A. D.) for Jude. Essential to the success of these evil poachers in the Lord’s vineyard was the secret and stealthy *modus operandi* which attended their operations.

“They feast with you without fear . . .” Like everything else in his letter, Jude here drew this from the Old Testament example of “shepherds that feed themselves.” (Ezekiel 34) Ezekiel called them “fat cattle: those who abuse the

flock of God, fouling their food with refuse, etc. As some would say today, “They were fat cats, living in luxury while impoverishing others.”

“Clouds without water . . .” Clouds without water were a terrible disappointment to people who needed rain most of the time.

“Carried along by winds . . .” This is a cloud metaphor having the meaning of instability. Now one may see such a cloud; then he doesn’t. That was the way it was with the false teachers.

“Autumn trees without fruit . . .” The autumn trees here were those which normally bore their fruit in the autumn. Fruit time was disappointment time for those who looked to barren trees.

“Doubly dead, uprooted . . .” In a sense, an unfruitful or barren tree, “was dead;” but, when it had already been grubbed up from the earth, it was “doubly dead.” Alfred Plummer, *op. cit.*, p. 513 wrote, “Spiritually, these men were twice dead in having returned after baptism to the death of sin.”

### **Verse 13**

“Wild waves of the sea . . .” Jude, like countless others, had visited a sea shore following a storm, finding the beach littered and polluted by every kind of filth and trash. In addition to such experience which it may be assumed he had, the words of the Prophet Isaiah pronounced the metaphor for him, “But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.” (Isaiah 57:20) A polluted beach was the perfect figure of the evil Gnostics.

“Wandering stars, for whom, the black darkness has been reserved forever.” The “wandering stars” here is a clear reference to meteorites which blaze a moment in the night sky and then fall into darkness forever. Yes, Jude used a word which is supposed to have meant literally, “stars which follow no orbit” (J. B. Phillips), or “stars which have wandered off course; but Jude was undeniably writing metaphorically.

Trees cannot be “twice dead;” oceans do not foam up “shame;” and stars do not “wander.” There is hardly anyone alive who has not used exactly the same

metaphor Jude used here, in such a remark as, “I saw a shooting star!” “Stars do not shoot! Jude in this letter had no reference whatever to “stars” in the technical sense, but to drifting fragments in space which, being trapped by the earth’s atmosphere, blaze gloriously for a moment and then perish forever. Stars? No, Meteorites is the technical word.

We appreciate the words of J. B. Mayor, Expositor’s Greek New Testament, Vol. V. p. 270, who admitted that “shooting stars would fit better in this passage.” Indeed it would; for that is exactly what the passage means. Those evil men who troubled the church were just like “shooting stars” that shine for a moment and then plunge to doom and darkness.

#### **Verse 14**

“And about these . . .” “These” are the false teachers, the evil men about whom God has already given a number of prophetic messages, in such events as His punishing the Israelites, destroying the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, and in the punishments like those which befell Cain, Balaam, and Korah; and, in addition to all that, “also” Enoch made a prophecy.”

Enoch, in the seventh generation from Adam . . .” This is the first and only reference to him in this letter, and this verse is the only thing in Jude that may fairly be connected with him.

Before leaving the question of Enoch’s having been a true prophet of God (we are not referring to the book of Enoch), it might be well to recall that Enoch “walked with God” in a very intimate fashion, that he was translated, not even tasting of death, and that he named his son Methusselah, bearing the prophetic meaning of “he dieth, and the flood cometh.” Therefore, we may surely believe Jude’s account of God’s using Enoch to utter a prophecy of the destruction of evil men.

“Behold the Lord came with many thousands of His holy ones . . .” This clause, along with all of verse 15, is the prophecy of Enoch. N. T. Caton, *op. cit.*, p. 209, wrote, “Here is what Enoch, inspired of God, told the people of his day. He warned them of a general judgment, when the Lord would come. He assured

them that the Lord would come, accompanied by ten thousand of his saints, or, as the Syriac has it, “with myriads of His saints.”

“Behold the Lord came . . .” God’s prophecies are so certain of fulfillment that the prophet speaks of them in the past tense. The first word of this prophecy (Behold the Lord came) is Maran atha (not Marana tha), a reference in the past tense (used prophetically for the future). (James Macknight, *op. cit.*, p. 208)

As Macknight observed, the first word of this prophecy was widely known and used by the apostles and the early church, Paul doing so in 1 Corinthians 16:22. This is very significant with regard to apostolic use of this expression, indicating that “Maran atha” probably has the meaning of “The Lord has come” in His incarnation, instead of being an invocation looking to the Second Coming.

### **Verse 15**

This prophecy came quite early in human history; and there is no sacred writer, no apostle, no prophet, and not even the Lord Himself, who exercised his ministry, except in the shadow of this promise of a day of judgment when God will settle His accounts with the wicked men who have despised Him. The fact of this prophecy colors every page of the Bible; and he is a vain and willful sinner indeed who dares to order his life as if this were not truth.

“To execute judgment . . .” This phrase occurs “only here and in John 5:27; but significantly, in John it occurs upon the lips of Jesus Christ Himself!

“Of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him . . .” They are as extensive and voluminous as all the libraries of earth combined. Trainloads of books pour out of great publishing houses every month, being directed in a large part, against God, against the Bible, against Christianity, against all truth and righteousness.

## Verse 16

W. H. Bennett, *The General Epistles* p. 340, wrote, "When it was safe to do so, they blustered and bullied, and played the superior person, but they cringed to rich men, and flattered them for the sake of dinners and presents."

Another analysis of this verse was given by Wallace which pointed out the numerous charges against the evil men enumerated in this single verse: (

- 1) they are grumblers,
- (2) they are complainers,
- (3) that are malcontents,
- (4) their sole guide is their lusts,
- (5) they are noisy boasters, and
- (6) all that they do is directed to procuring some personal benefit for themselves. How many on earth today are described by this same analysis?

## Verse 17

Some have tried to make the language here mean that the age of the apostles was past when this was written; but John A. T. Robinson, *op. cit.*, p. 179, pointed out that, "This need not imply the end of the apostolic age," going on to add the phrase "our apostles" was used by Clement. Also, "The phrase itself is compatible with the apostolic age."

"The words that were spoken . . ." There is no need to inquire whether this means "written words" or "spoken words;" for the apostles were still living when this was written, and it could have been, and probably was, both.

## Verse 18

The apostle Peter likewise prophesied of the scoffers who would make light of the truth; and, from what Jude wrote here, it may be inferred that all of the apostles gave the same teaching.

“In the last time . . .” Carl F. H. Henry, *The Decline of Theology*, Vol. X. p. 428, writing in *Christianity Today*, understood the New Testament to teach that in the years immediately before the Second Coming, the true faith, “once for all delivered” will be boycotted as if it were heresy, and the sole surviving heresy at that.”

Delbert R. Rose, *op. cit.*, p. 445, stressed that for men committed to godlessness in their personal lives, who made light of all authority, who foamed out their shame, and spoke blasphemously and contemptuously of heavenly persons—such as they, would naturally laugh at the idea of a judgment to come.”

### **Verse 19**

“The ones who cause division . . .” They make divisions, by separating themselves from the true church, and by inducing others to do so likewise. The rest of the verse means that, “They live as brute beasts, guided simply by their lusts and passions, their Bible being the manifold devices and covetousness of their own hearts.” (Adam Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 955)

“Devoid of the Spirit . . .” The blessed Spirit, long having been grieved, insulted, resisted, lusted against, and at last “quenched” by themselves, such men were no longer capable of any goodness whatever.

J. B. Mayor, *op. cit.*, p. 273, wrote, “The false teachers were so absorbed in the lower sensuous nature that they no longer possessed, in any real sense of the word, that element in man’s compound being, which is itself spiritual, and capable therefore of communion with the Divine Spirit.”

### **Verse 20**

“Building yourselves up . . .” If we followed the pattern in works of this kind, “there is not anything you can do to be saved,” “it is all of grace, and none of works,” “no man can be his own Savior.”

Jude wrote, That Christians are to build themselves up on their most holy faith! No New Testament author was afraid to stress what men must themselves do if they hope to receive salvation.



Peter said, “Save yourselves from this crooked generation.” Paul wrote, that men should “work out their own salvation.” All such teachings, including this before us, have the effect of stressing the things men are commanded to do, with the sacred implication, that if they refuse to comply with the instructions upon which God’s grace is to be appropriated, their failure to comply is a forfeiture of the grace.

No man can earn salvation. Of course, he cannot; but neither can the willfully disobedient enter heaven. When one thinks of it, what possible use could God have for any soul that refuses to do the things God commanded?

“On your most holy faith . . .” Either way this is understood, whether subjectively as Christian’s trust/faith, or objectively as the Christian religion, there is a human response factor in salvation.

“Praying in the Holy Spirit . . .” Prayer as a vital means of Christian growth and security is in sight here, including the blessed promise of the holy earnest that aids prayer. Neglect of this vital duty may prove fatal to the neglecter.

#### **Verse 21**

“Keep yourselves in the love of God . . .” Again the human response factor is stressed, the meaning here being exactly what it was in verse 20, “keeping oneself in the love of God” being one and the same thing with obeying God’s commandments.

Summarizing the admonition of these verses, what Jude commanded, or rather pleaded what the faithful should do, we have this:

- (1) work at your faith;
- (2) give constant attention to prayer;
- (3) receive, cultivate and cherish the indwelling Spirit,
- (4) keep yourselves in God’s love through strict obedience to His will,  
and
- (5) wherein one is frustrated or discouraged by failures (and there are failures,

- (6) look unto the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ who will save the last unworthy one of us if we give Him half a chance to do so!

“Eternal life . . .” Notice that this is preceded by “to” indicating that in some aspects of it, we do not now have eternal life; but this is not to deny John’s great promises regarding this; because they may be fully understood as our actual possession of eternal life, in the sense of, having the blessed promise of it, the assurance of it, the earnest of it, and the vital, living hope of it.

### **Verses 22-23**

The difficult Greek of this passage has challenged scholars for ages; and, even today, there is no unanimity on how it should be rendered. In such cases as this, there is no certain manner of being absolutely right about it; but the opinion of, F. F. Bruce, *op. cit.*, p. 135, would appear to be sound, “I think that most probably two classes are envisaged. Those who are responsible for maintaining due order in the churches must use different methods toward those who persist in inculcating subversive and immoral doctrine and those who have been misled by false teachers.”

The following rendition from the New English Bible is based upon the same view: “There are some doubting souls who need your pity; snatch them from the flames and save them. There are others for whom your pity must be mixed with fear; hate the very clothing that is contaminated with sensuality.”

“Snatching them out of the fire . . .” This has a metaphorical meaning, “rescue them, as you would someone from a burning building.”

“On some have mercy with fear . . .” No fellow-being lost in sin is otherwise than an object of pity in the hearts of Christians; but the danger to Christians themselves who might attempt to rescue some in this group is real and threatening. Regardless of Christian pity for some of the lost, there must be fear in attempting their rescue, a fear commanded in this sense; and the omission of the words “save them” in the second clause, as well as the hatred of their very “clothing” which is enjoined, falls short of any apostolic edict that any rescue at all should be attempted in the case of some. The greater words of Jesus concerning the blind guides was, “Let them alone!” And there are

overtones of those words in this where pity is commanded, but rescue is not. We can only pray that we have not been misled in following the New English Bible in this verse.

## THE BENEDICTION

### Verses 24-25

Delbert R. Rose, *op. cit.*, p. 448, remarked that, “If Jude is known or noticed at all by churchgoers, it is because of the frequent use of verses 24-25, in such things as the benediction.”

“Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling . . .” If Christians heed the instructions of their Lord and walk in the light as He is in the light, they will not stumble; and, for those who thus walk, the Lord indeed can and does guard them from stumbling.

“And to make you stand in the presence of His glory . . .” This refers to the “great day” of verse 6, the judgment day, when all nations shall be assembled before the White Throne.

“Blameless with great joy . . .” David F. Payne, *A New Testament Commentary*, p. 628, and with others, identifies this as a metaphor “from the Old Testament sacrificial system (Leviticus 1:3, etc.); but there may also be in it another glimpse of the perfection commanded in Matthew 5:48, and promised to Christians as an actual achievement upon their behalf, not by themselves, but through Christ according to Paul’s promise that every man should be presented “perfect in Christ.” (Colossians 1:28)

“To the only God our Savior . . .” This stress of the unity of God could have found such a prominent place in primitive doxologies and benedictions as an effective rejection of antinomian Gnostics who were infected with polytheism. Paul also referred to God as Savior.

“Through Jesus Christ our Lord . . .” God is not man’s Savior apart from his acceptance and obedience of His Son Jesus Christ.

“Be glory, majesty, dominion and authority . . .” All of the ultimate belongs to God. “In Him we live and move and have our being.” All of the praise,

all of the glory, all of the worship and adoration that human hearts are capable of are rightfully given only to God through Christ.

“Before all time and now and forever . . .” Delbert R. Rose, *op. cit.*, p. 628, wrote, “This is as complete a statement of eternity as can be made in human language.”

Our blessed Savior was, and is, and shall be for evermore. He is One with the Father, the eternal God who is ever and perpetually the “I AM” of all time and eternity.

“Amen . . .” It means “So be it.” It calls God to witness the words which are sealed by it. It is the signal that any hymn or prayer concluded by it is held to be sacred in the eyes of God, and is a pledge of the sincerity and integrity of the petitioner.