

Jude 1

- Few studies of scripture combine so few verses with so much intrigue and mystery as the book of Jude
 - The letter is only 25 verses, so it's a very quick read, yet it's one of the least often studied books of scripture
 - Jude's letter invites wonder and confusion due mainly to its frequent references to extra-Biblical material
 - Yet the author makes little attempt to explain his fleeting references to strange and marvelous things
 - So generations of Christians have neglected the letter, largely out of ignorance
 - Still, something we give the least attention can often be the thing that most deserves examination...like that check engine light on your dash
 - All this is ironic, because Jude's purpose in writing was to warn the church against overlooking false teachers who had arrived in the church
 - A few years, perhaps a decade, earlier, Peter had written to Jewish believers in the churches of the Diaspora
 - The Diaspora refers to ten Greek cities outside Palestine where Jews settled after Rome conquered the nation
 - Collectively, these cities held the bulk of Jewish believers in the early church
 - Our NT includes five letters written to these early Christians
 - The letters of Hebrews, James, 1 & 2 Peter and Jude comprise the Jewish Epistles
 - In his second letter, Peter warned the churches that wicked men, false teachers, were going to come to them seeking to corrupt the faith
 - Peter began his second chapter of that letter in this way:

2Pet. 2:1 But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves.

2Pet. 2:2 Many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned;

- In Jude's day, those false teachers had in fact arrived in the Diaspora, just as Peter predicted
- So Jude writes to encourage the churches to recognize and respond to the fulfillment of Peter's warning
- Jude's letter shares another feature common to all the Jewish epistles: he borrows liberally from Jewish history and writings
 - The Jewish people knew the story of their nation intimately, since it was recorded in scripture
 - But depending on which school of Jewish teaching they experienced, their understanding of the meaning of that history could vary widely
 - So the NT Jewish letters commonly draw from that history to make theological application, and Jude does this extensively
 - So to understand the letter properly, we must spend some time in places revisiting that history ourselves
- But as I said, Jude's letter is unique in the NT, and in fact it is arguably the most remarkable of the five Jewish Epistles
 - First, the structure of the letter is poetic
 - Jude displays a remarkable love for triplets...and I'm not speaking of his dating life
 - Jude writes using triads (i.e., thoughts expressed in threes) throughout his letter, for a total of 14 triads in just 25 verses
 - Those triads offer a convenient way to organize our study of the letter, like an outline with 14 points
 - Secondly, Jude is the only book of NT scripture sourced by someone who was not considered an apostle
 - Jude specifically excludes himself from the company of such men, as we'll see in v.17

- Now neither Luke nor Mark were apostles either, but Luke's material was sourced by Paul, while Mark's material was sourced by Peter
 - And all other letters were written directly by Apostles
 - So Apostles were the source for the content in all NT books save Jude's
- And yet the early church fathers universally accepted the authority of this letter, considering it inspired
 - Jude had a ministry as a traveling evangelist, accompanied by his wife, according to Paul in 1 Cor 9:5
 - Perhaps he was also accompanied by an Apostle or had some other claim to apostolic review
 - In fact, Jude had a close family connection to an Apostle, who may have been his muse: his brother James
- And that brings me to the third distinction for Jude's letter: Jude was one of only two NT authors with a family connection to Jesus
 - He was a half-brother of Jesus, and a full brother of James, the author of the letter by that name
 - Because of his relationship to Jesus, Jude's sons and grandsons, were considered descendants of the House of David and a threat to Roman rule
 - When the Roman Emperor Domitian heard they were proclaiming a new kingdom, he arrested them
 - He suspected they were trying to re-establish a Jewish Kingdom in place of Roman rule
 - Greek historians record that Jude's grandsons defended themselves by showing the Caesar their rough hands from a life of farming
 - Which proved they were merely working peasants, not nobility seeking a kingdom in this world
 - They were men awaiting a kingdom in Heaven

- Fourthly, Jude's letter is unique for the way it quotes from another letter of scripture
 - Jude quotes no less than thirteen times from the letter of 2 Peter
 - If he had quoted Peter anymore, we would have been forced to call this the third letter of Peter
 - Jude quotes so much because his purpose in writing is to tell the Jewish believers, "Peter told you so!"
 - Peter warned believers that false teachers would come in the future
 - And now that those false teachers were working their way through the Diaspora, Jude writes to say these are the men Peter warned you about
 - We'll look at that in more detail as well
- Finally, Jude is the only author of scripture to quote from the apocryphal literature: ancient books of wisdom often portrayed as inspired texts
 - Jude quotes from a book called the Assumption of Moses and another called the Book of Enoch
 - Jude's quotes are points of controversy, since the apocryphal writings are, in fact, NOT scripture
 - These extra-biblical works are routinely filled with error and myth and contradictions
 - They are particularly dangerous because some traditions try to pass them off as inspired, thus introducing error and heresy into the canon of scripture
 - So Jude's decision to incorporate quotes from Jewish apocryphal writings causes some Christians to squirm and ask whether those books are therefore to be considered inspired works
 - But as we'll see, Jude's choice to incorporate some details doesn't mean he was endorsing these works
 - As we encounter these quotes in the letter, we'll examine each one, in turn

- Moving to the text...as when studying any epistle, this study must begin with some background on the author, the audience and the circumstances in which it was written
 - Which leads us to the opening verses of the letter and the first and second triads
 - You'll notice there is only one chapter in Jude (one of five books in the Bible with a single chapter)

Jude 1 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:

Jude 2 May mercy and peace and love be multiplied to you.

- First, Jude is not this author's name
 - His name is actually Judah or Judas in Greek; Jude is a contrived English version of the name
 - The name Judas has come to carry a certain negative connotation as a result of Judas Iscariot
 - So when the first English translators came to the letter of Judas, they elected to translate his name to Jude to distance this author from Judas, the traitor
 - Also, there is an apocryphal book called the Gospel of Judas
 - This is perhaps another reasons why the translators may have chosen to change the name
 - The change was purely contrived, yet out of respect for tradition and familiarity, I'll stick with the name Jude
 - Jude identifies himself in the traditional way of most epistle writers, as a bond-servant of Christ
 - A bond-servant is the word *doulos* in Greek, which is literally the word for slave
 - It refers to a particular kind of slave, one who has entered into his arrangement freely and joyfully
 - And once the arrangement is established, the relationship becomes permanent

- So Jude is identifying himself as a man bound to serving Jesus Christ for life
- It's always fascinated readers that neither Jude nor James chose to identify themselves to their readers by their human relationship to Jesus
 - You might suppose that having such an intimate family connection to Jesus would have been something these two men wore like a badge of honor
 - They could have leveraged that association to gain added respect and authority
 - Certainly we can see something like that happening in the church today, can't we?
 - Consider that somewhere in the world today, there are men and women who are the direct descendants of Joseph and Mary through their other children
 - If someone could trace their family relationships back to that family, wouldn't they be using that for personal benefit?
 - Almost certainly
 - So why did James and Jude completely ignore their family connection to Jesus?
 - Because neither of these men came to know their own brother as Messiah until **after** His resurrection
 - And though they grew up with Jesus in the same home, they never believed in His claims to be Messiah
 - We see this in John's Gospel

[John 7:5](#) For not even His brothers were believing in Him.

- It still blows my mind to imagine what Jude must have thought when he first came to faith in Christ, his earthly half brother
 - To realize that the older brother you had grown up around was actually the God Who created the universe and all it contains...can you even imagine?

- We know younger siblings always suffer the indignity of comparisons to the achievement of older brothers, but this is ridiculous...
- We can be sure James' and Jude's delayed understanding of Who Jesus was didn't give them added credibility within the body of Christ
 - Quite the opposite: it likely was a point of shame for both of them
 - Especially since their deeds were captured in John Chapter 7, where they mocked their brother's claim to be Messiah
 - So these men correctly set aside any claim to being special or worthy of greater respect owing to their association with Jesus
- Instead, they made reference to their spiritual relationships
 - Whatever earthly relationship they had prior to coming to faith in the Messiah became utterly meaningless the moment they were born again
 - This was not some show of false modesty on their parts
 - This is consistent with the Bible's teaching on our identity as believers
 - When we become followers of Jesus Christ, we are born again spiritually
 - Just as our physical birth gained us relationships with parents and siblings, so did our spiritual rebirth
 - Moreover, scripture says that the relationships we gain through our spiritual birth take precedence over any earthly relationships
 - Even Jesus Himself, when asked to give preference to his earthly mother and unbelieving brothers who had joined the crowds, said this:

[Luke 8:21](#) But He answered and said to them, "My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it."

- So Jude and James made no reference to their earthly connection to Jesus
 - As far as these men were concerned, their earthly relationship with Jesus was long gone and no longer relevant

- The only relationship they had that mattered was as a bondservant to the Lord, the Creator
- And so it is for us as well
 - Our identity in this world is the same as our identity to come: we are servants of Christ
 - We may hold other affiliations for a time...
 - Longhorns, Aggies, Texans...
 - We may take pride in our nationality, or our cultural heritage, or our past achievements
 - But never let those things define you or overshadow your identity in Christ
 - Our loyalty is to the Lord, our country is not of this world, and our wealth and inheritance is not found on earth
- Since we're talking about identities, why did Jude call himself the brother of James?
 - Because as we said earlier, Jude was not an apostle
 - But his brother had become the leader of the church in Jerusalem, and as such, the leader of the Jewish Church
 - It's likely that Jude was an elder or other church leader under James' authority
 - So mentioning James gave Jude some additional credibility in writing to the church
 - Plus, I wonder if he spent most of his life distancing himself from the "other" Judas?
- Looking deeper at the first verse, you'll notice it ends with Jude's first triad describing his audience of Christians
 - Jude says we are called, beloved by the Father, and kept for Jesus
 - Jude neatly references the different roles of the Three Persons of the Godhead concerning our salvation
 - First, the call of the Gospel is the work of the Holy Spirit

- No one becomes a Christian unless and until the Holy Spirit draws us to the message of the Gospel

[1Cor. 12:3](#) Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus is accursed"; and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.

- Secondly, the reason we even get called in the first place is because of the Father's love for us and His decision to demonstrate His love to us

[John 6:65](#) And He was saying, "For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father."

- The Father's love is the basis for the entire plan of redemption
- And our opportunity to be a part of it, Jude reminds us, is evidence in itself of God's love
- When we face one of those dark moments in life when we wonder if God hears and cares, remember Jude's description
- The very fact that we are included in the family of God is proof of the Father's love for us
- Finally, we are kept for Jesus
 - Jesus is the focus of everything in Creation
 - You weren't saved for your own sake
 - Your salvation wasn't a gift for you...if was the Father's gift to His Son
 - We are the Bride for the Groom
 - Being kept by the Spirit and the Father, for the Son
 - Remember, it's all about Jesus, not about you and me
- Next Jude gives his second triad in his salutation
 - Once again Jude succinctly sums up the gifts God bestows upon believers as a result of God's plan of salvation
 - First, by our relationship in Christ we received mercy
 - This is always the first thing we think about as we consider the benefits of membership in the Christian club

- Mercy from God's judgment, mercy from the wrath of God
- Mercy from an eternity spent in Hell
- This is the chief selling point when we share the Gospel: receiving God's mercy
- The mercy of God through Christ makes every other benefit possible
- Following mercy, we experienced peace
 - Knowing that we have been reconciled with God because of the sacrifice Christ offered in Himself on the cross, leaves us sleeping at night without fear of where we'll be when we die
 - We live in hope for eternity
 - We live knowing that this world is the worst we will experience
 - An assurance of Heaven...a peace unbelievers never experience
- Finally, we find love of a different kind
 - We are granted the capacity to love in the way God loves: self-sacrificially, unconditionally
 - The love of God becomes a part of who we are
 - And the love of God multiplies in us as we devote ourselves to coming to a greater knowledge of Him in His word
 - And as we devote ourselves to applying what we learn by the Spirit
 - These gifts are spiritual gifts, spiritual rewards we receive
 - But through the mystery of spirit and flesh working together, the Lord manifests these spiritual gifts in our physical nature and experience
 - We receive spiritual mercy, yet it yields in us greater capacity for kindness and mercy toward other sinners
 - We receive a spiritual peace that passes understanding, but it enables us to walk without fear in the face of persecution and trials

- We receive the spiritual gift of God's love, but it manifests within us as the fruits of the Spirit, so that we will show God's love to others
- Finally, Jude states his purpose in writing

Jude 3 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.

- Jude, like all the epistle writers, likes to introduce a next section in his letter with the word "beloved" (John does this a lot also)
 - He says he had plans originally to write to them on a different topic: concerning their common salvation
 - The word in Greek for common is *koinos*, which means common property
 - Today, we might say public property
 - In other words, Jude was to write to the Jewish Christians in the Diaspora about the nature of the salvation they all shared
 - What was Jude's interest concerning their common salvation?
 - Well, we don't know because he changed his topic
 - Perhaps he was going to echo some of the themes of Hebrews, explaining how the Old Covenant gives way to the New Covenant
 - In the end, it's doesn't matter, because the Spirit wanted Jude to talk about other things
 - I think that's our lesson to take from Jude's change of heart
 - When we're operating under the Spirit, listening to the Lord, working in His will...our plans will naturally change from time to time
 - And our understanding of Scripture will change as well, since one goes hand in hand with the other
 - If our understanding of scripture, and our desires in ministry and our plans for accomplishing those desires NEVER change, what does that say about our willingness to hear from the Spirit?

- What are the odds that our first inclinations were 100% in line with the Spirit's desires? Probably pretty long odds
- More likely, our unwillingness to change plans is a reflection of our unwillingness to listen to the Lord
 - Jude listened, so he changed plans
- His new plan was to write an appeal to the church so they would take action
 - Jude wants the church to contend earnestly for the faith
 - Contend earnestly is a single word in Greek meaning to struggle or fight or resist on behalf of something or someone
 - And the fight in this case is for the faith
 - How do you fight for faith? Isn't faith something that comes into the heart of a person by divine favor (grace)?
 - We can't fight to establish faith, right?
 - Yes, this tells us that the fight Jude wants to encourage isn't a struggle to win souls
 - It's a fight to preserve the meaning of the Gospel message
 - It's a fight over doctrine and practice, over truth
 - It's a fight against false teaching
 - Jude hopes to stimulate his readers to fight against distortion and falsehoods creeping into the church
 - This is truly a fight, one that involves a form of hostility against others
 - Not armed hostility, but it's a real battle nonetheless
 - Paul calls it the "good fight" and speaks of "keeping the faith" through a struggle
- The struggle is to maintain the faith as it was once handed down to the saints
 - There is a very important principal expressed in that phrase
 - The faith, or we could say the content of the message of salvation, is something that came once

- With the coming of Christ and the fulfillment of His work on the cross, it is finished
- All that is needed to be known has arrived
- As the writer of Hebrews said:

[Heb. 1:1](#) God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways,

[Heb. 1:2](#) in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.

- To anyone or any school of thought or any group that teaches there is something missing in our understanding of Christianity, scripture says they are wrong
 - The faith that saves, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, was delivered in its entirety “once”
 - This moment was collectively the period of time when the Lord walked the Earth, and in the time immediately following when the men He appointed as Apostles delivered the message He gave them
 - Remember, the word apostle means one sent with a message
 - That message was the faith, the Gospel delivered once for all
- Many have tried to come along since that time and make a claim that the original church missed something
 - The gnostics and Judaizers made that claim
 - The Catholic Church has made that claim over the centuries and continues to make it today
 - Mormons make that claim; JW’s make that claim; Christian Science makes that claim; many others have made that claim
 - But scripture says that all we need to understand came through Jesus and His apostles once for all
- Secondly, it has been handed down, Jude says
 - The handing down refers to the Apostles’ teaching, and that teaching becoming canonized and shared among the faithful

- It's a reference to scripture and to the power of the Holy Spirit to protect and deliver God's word to ears that will hear, across both time and distance
 - It is self-evidently God's plan that the Gospel be shared, that it move, that it be handed down, in its original form
 - And the word of God is the means by which the faith is kept pure, having been once delivered
 - When you hear churches or pastors extolling the virtues of studying God's word...
 - Or pastors like me arguing for the exposition of scripture from the pulpit (as opposed to other forms of preaching)...
 - It's because of the principle of the faith having been once delivered and now handed down
 - We are all called to engage in a fight for the faith, but before we can fight for it, we have to know what "it" is
 - And if we are Biblically illiterate, we are hopelessly unarmed in any battle over the doctrines and precepts of our faith
- Every Christian is an intended recipient for this letter, and it might as easily have been written in the twenty first century rather than the first century
 - The faith of our church is as much under attack - if not more so - than the faith in Jude's day
 - The attacks range from subtle to full force
 - They come from people inside and outside the church
 - They take many forms, but they all work in a similar fashion
 - They seek to introduce new thoughts, new requirements or attach new meaning to the faith once delivered
 - Then with these new thoughts, they reinterpret - or completely ignore - traditional views of scripture
 - And the end is always the same: the Gospel is no longer a message of our sin, Christ's righteousness, and the need to reconcile with God

- In its place, the “faith” becomes a promise of wealth, health, acceptance, happiness, or some other worthless, meaningless, temporal and utterly bankrupt principle in place of our eternal salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ
- Therefore, we are all called to engage in this fight
 - And as we move further through the letter over the next several weeks, we will come to understand who our enemies are and how we are to approach this fight
 - I hope you will join me in the battle