



Jude

Strongly worded advice on the dangers of selfish, critical leaders.

Jude is a very short book, only 24 verses long, written to an early Christian community about the dangers that selfish, immoral, false leaders posed to them as a community. Using examples from Israel's history, Jude urges the community to beware of these kinds of leaders and to rest in confidence in the faithfulness and love of God.



How long will it take?

Reading time: about 4 mins
Short of time? It's only 24 verses – read it all!



Genre

Letter



Anything tricky?

It quotes 1 Enoch 1.9 which is neither in the canon of 66 books accepted by all Christians as the Bible text, nor in the additional texts accepted by Catholics and others. The only churches which deem it to be canonical are the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church and Eritrean Orthodox Tewahedo Church.



Inspiring quotes

But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. And have mercy on those who doubt. *(Jude 1.20-22)*



About the Author

Jude 1.1 says that the author is the brother of James. This suggests that he may be the same person as the 'Jude, the brother of James' mentioned in Luke 6.16 and Acts 1.13.

Some parts of the Christian tradition identify Jude as one of the brothers of Jesus (see Mark 6.3 and Matthew 13.55); others suggest that they were step-brothers or cousins.

The name Jude – or Judas – was a very common one in the first century. It is possible that this Jude was not the same one mentioned in the Gospels.

What do we know about him?

Very little is known about Jude and this letter tells us very little about him other than that he oversaw the well-being of a Christian community and was worried that they were being led astray by unreliable leaders.

It is not even clear where Jude wrote from nor where the community was that he was writing to.



About the times

The letter is written to a group of early Christians in the second half of the first century ad, maybe around ad 60-70 but it could be later.

What were people feeling?

The Christian community was finding its feet and confidence but was struggling with unreliable leaders who were knocking them off course and causing divisions. So they were probably feeling quite confused and bewildered.

Other books set around this time

2 Peter



What kind of Book is it?

Jude is a letter or epistle written to community of Christians expressing concern about their leaders.

As with all letters, the epistle of Jude is writing into a situation that they all knew about and we don't. There is not much evidence in the letter to help us piece exactly what was going on.

It can help to try and imagine what it might have felt like to receive a letter like this.



Look out for...

Look out for what Jude says about false teachers – can you piece together what they might have been doing and saying that so upset Jude?

Jude quotes both from the Bible and from a non-biblical book called 1 Enoch (which is only considered to be canonical in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and Eritrean Orthodox Tewahedo Church). Look out for these quotes as you read and if you have time check where they come from in your Bible.



How is it structured?

1-2	Introduction
3-4	A plea to contend for the faith
5-16	Arguments against false teachers
17-23	How to stand firm against false teachers
24-25	Look to Jesus who is the source of our strength



What could this mean for me?

Jude has a clear vision of 'good' leaders and 'good' followers of the way – if you were to put into positive the negative comments in Jude, what characteristics would he look for in a good leader? What could these tell us about leadership today?



Discussion group questions

- Were there any parts of the book that you particularly liked or which inspired you?
- Were there any parts of the book that you disliked or which troubled you?
- What did *you* think the book was about?
- Jude was troubled by leaders, who in his opinion had 'stolen in' (verse 4) among the Christians and were trying to enforce their own view on them. From what you read, what do you think they were trying to do, and why do you think this worried Jude so much?
- We are as dependent on good leadership today as Jude's audience was. What do you think are the markers of good and bad leaders?
- Jude uses some striking images in this book – like 'waterless clouds carried along by the winds'. Which phrases jumped out at you while you read and what did they communicate to you?
- Did you read anything in the book that touched you, expanded your faith or made you think more deeply about your life and how you live it?



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