

God's Glory in God's Word

Jude: Agonizing for the Faith

Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. (Jude 1:3)

Jude is a short letter with a lot of “noise”:

1. Who wrote it?
2. Was Mary a perpetual virgin? See #1.
3. What does it mean that people are “designated for condemnation”?
4. Did the Lord save a people out of the land of Egypt? Or did Jesus?
5. What is Jude talking about when he says the angels “left their proper dwelling”?
6. Enoch prophesied???
7. When did the archangel Michael contend with the devil over the body of Moses?

There is no doubt that Jude is one of the more interesting books of the Bible to study because of questions like these. But, if we are not careful, we can get bogged down in the debates in this letter and miss what is the critical overall point of the letter. Let's consider the point of the letter first and then consider the “noise”.

I found it necessary...

In verse 3, we should see the urgency with which Jude writes. He sets aside what he is eager to do – “write to you about our common salvation” – but writes about something else.

For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. (Jud 1:4)

These are the false prophets spoken of by Jesus. They are the fierce wolves of whom Paul warned the Ephesian elders. And Jude pulls no punches concerning them:

Yet in like manner these people also, relying on their dreams, defile the flesh, reject authority, and blaspheme the glorious ones. (Jud 1:8)

But these people blaspheme all that they do not understand, and they are destroyed by all that they, like unreasoning animals, understand instinctively. (Jud 1:10)

These are hidden reefs at your love feasts, as they feast with you without fear, shepherds feeding themselves; waterless clouds, swept along by winds; fruitless trees in late autumn, twice dead, uprooted; wild waves of the sea, casting up the foam of their own shame; wandering stars, for whom the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved forever. (Jud 1:12-13)

These are grumblers, malcontents, following their own sinful desires; they are loud-mouthed boasters, showing favoritism to gain advantage. (Jud 1:16)

“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. (Mat 7:15)

Even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light...(2 Corinthians 11:14b)

What's a Believer to Do?

Verse 3 tells us why Jude is writing – to appeal to the church to “contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints”. The Greek word translated “contend” is the same word from which we get the English word “agonize”. It has a competitive meaning – think the struggle that an athlete goes through in preparing for a major contest – or a soldier preparing for battle. This type of imagery is common throughout the New Testament. Christianity is not easy – it is agony!

So how does a believer agonize according to Jude?

Remember

But **you must remember**, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. They said to you, "In the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions." (Jud 1:17-18)

It seems silly to say that if we don't remember, we will forget. But there's nothing silly about it...

And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died at the age of 110 years. And they buried him within the boundaries of his inheritance in Timnath-heres, in the hill country of Ephraim, north of the mountain of Gaash. And all that generation also were gathered to their fathers. **And there arose another generation after them who did not know the LORD or the work that he had done for Israel.** (Jdg 2:8-10)

Stay in the love of God

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. (Jud 1:20-21)

Have mercy on those who doubt

And have mercy on those who doubt; save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh. (Jud 1:22-23)

Most importantly! Praise God!

Now to him who is able to **keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless** before the presence of his glory with great joy, **to the only God, our Savior**, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen. (Jud 1:24-25)

Part 2: Noise? What Noise?

#1 & 2: Who wrote Jude, and what does the perpetual virginity of Mary have to do with it?

Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox teach that Mary remained a virgin her entire life. Passages in Scripture speaking of Jesus' brothers and sisters refer to either a) cousins or b) children of Joseph from another marriage. This belief influences the assumption that the Jude who wrote this letter is the 2nd Judas (Jude is a form of Judas) that was an apostle – not Judas Iscariot.

On the other hand, most commentators – but not John Gill – attribute the authorship of Jude to Judas the brother of James – and Jesus.

Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of **James** and Joses and **Judas** and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him. (Mar 6:3)

And when day came, he called his disciples and chose from them twelve, whom he named apostles: Simon, whom he named Peter, and Andrew his brother, and James and John, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot, and **Judas the son of James**, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor. (Luk 6:13-16)

3: What does it mean that people are “designated for condemnation”?

For certain people have crept in unnoticed *who long ago were designated for this condemnation*, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. (Jud 1:4)

Time will not permit us to consider every aspect of the arguments around free will, God’s foreknowledge, and predestination. Suffice it to say that many – including those in the Reformed community – struggle with the concepts. The first 3 paragraphs from Chapter 3 of the 1689 Baptist Confession should be considered when thinking about the topic. We will be considering these on Wednesday evenings in April.

4: Did “the Lord” save a people out of the land of Egypt? Or did “Jesus”?

ESV & CSB

*Now I want to remind you, although you once fully knew it, that **Jesus**, who saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe. (Jud 1:5)*

Latin Vulgate

commonere autem vos volo scientes semel omnia quoniam **lesus** populum de terra Aegypti salvans secundo eos qui non crediderunt perdidit (Jude 1:5 VUL)

^{KJV} **Jude 1:5** I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that **the Lord**, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not. (Jude 1:5 KJV)

I do believe the 2020 New American Standard Bible is incorrect in its footnote regarding the text – “one early ms (manuscript) Jesus”. From Bruce Metzger’s “A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament”:

“Despite the weighty attestation supporting Jesus (list of many sources), a majority of the Committee was of the opinion that the reading was difficult to the point of impossibility, and explained its origin in terms of transcriptional oversight”.

In Greek, the words for Lord and Jesus are similar enough that it COULD be the case.

Without revisiting previous comments on textual criticism, it is important to understand that much like the absence of the Johannine Comma does not negate the doctrine of the Trinity, the translation of “the Lord” rather than “Jesus” does not negate the notion of Jesus being active in the Old Testament. There are no textual variants in 1 Corinthians 10:4:

*For I want you to know, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, **and the Rock was Christ**. (1Co 10:1-4)*

5 & 6: What is Jude talking about when he says the angels “left their proper dwelling”? Enoch prophesied?

And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day-- (Jud 1:6)

It was also about these that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied...(Jud 1:14a)

From 1 Enoch (NOT CANON)

[Chapter 6]

¹ And it came to pass when the children of men had multiplied that in those days were born unto ² them beautiful and comely daughters. And the angels, the children of the heaven, saw and lusted after them, and said to one another: 'Come, let us choose us wives from among the children of men ³ and beget us children.

[Chapter 10]

1 Then said the Most High, the Holy and Great One spake, and sent Uriel to the son of Lamech, 2 and said to him: 'Go to Noah and tell him in my name "Hide thyself!" and reveal to him the end that is approaching: that the whole earth will be destroyed, and a deluge is about to come ³ upon the whole earth, and will destroy all that is on it. And now instruct him that he may escape ⁴ and his seed may be preserved for all the generations of the world.' And again the Lord said to Raphael: 'Bind Azazel hand and foot, and cast him into the darkness: and make an opening ⁵ in the desert, which is in Dudael, and cast him therein. And place upon him rough and jagged rocks, and cover him with darkness, and let him abide there for ever, and cover his face that he may ^{6,7} not see light. And on the day of the great judgement he shall be cast into the fire.

[Chapter 1]

And behold! He cometh with ten thousands of His holy ones to execute judgement upon all, and to destroy all the ungodly; and to convict all flesh of all the works of their ungodliness which they have ungodly committed, and all o the hard things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.

7: When did the archangel Michael contend with the devil over the body of Moses?

Jude's reference to a noncanonical book is puzzling for many Christians today. Did he believe the account was historically accurate, or did he cite it to make a point? It is difficult to be certain, but it seems likely that Jude believed the story was rooted in history. He gave no indication elsewhere that the traditions cited were unhistorical. But does that lead to the conclusion that the canon of Scripture should be expanded, or did Jude think **Assumption of Moses** was inspired? These are vexing questions, but we should not draw the conclusion that the citation from a book means that the entire book is inspired. Paul cited Greek poets and sayings without suggesting that the entire work was authoritative Scripture (Acts 17:28; 1 Cor 15:33; Titus 1:12). Jude did not intend to put a canonical stamp on Assumption of Moses simply because he cited it. He viewed this story as true or helpful, or he believed it was an illustration of the truth he desired to teach.

Schreiner, Thomas R.. 1, 2 Peter, Jude: 37 (The New American Commentary) (p. 460). B&H Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.