

The Epistle of Jude

Introduction

Canonicity

- Received by early Church Fathers as canonical
 - Clement of Alexandria, (155–220)
 - Tertullian (160-220)
 - Hippolytus (170-235)
 - Origen (185-254)
 - Eusebius (260-340)
 - Athanasius (296-373)
- Listed as received (Part of the established NT Canon) in the Muratorion Canon list (2nd Century)

“Enough has been said to show that the Epistle had considerable use at an early period, and the later doubts which occurred must not be allowed to obscure this fact. The attestation for it is particularly strong and questionings appear to have arisen mainly because of the author’s use of apocryphal books.”¹

Jude’s use of the Apocryphal Book of Enoch

- Jude appears to quote from the Book of Enoch, a lengthy (108 chapters) apocryphal book compiled most likely having its final compilation between 95 and 34 BCE. The most extant complete manuscripts are written in *Ge’ez*, a form of Ethiopic. Fragments of the Book of Enoch, written in Aramaic, have been found among the Dead Sea Scrolls at Qumran.
- Jude appears to quote from the Book of Enoch in 1:14.
14. It was also about these men that Enoch, in the seventh generation from Adam, prophesied, saying, Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of His holy ones,
15. to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.”
- That Jude attributes “prophecy” to Enoch should not be taken to mean that the the Book of Enoch should be received as canonical, i.e., inspired Scripture. Jude uses the verb *προφητεύω* (*prophēteuō*), “to prophesy,” which is found only one other time in the Apostolic Scriptures (Matt 15:7, parallel in Mk 7:6). The cognate noun, *προφήτης* (*prophētēs*) “prophet” however, is used in Titus 1:12 in regard to a heathen poet. “One of themselves, a prophet of their own, said, “Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.” (Tit. 1:14). This in itself indicates that the concept of “prophecy” does not necessarily identify the so-called “prophet” as being sent by God. Even pagans ascribed to themselves the category of “prophet.” It seems most likely that Jude is quoting a well-known axiom extant in his day which was also used in the Book of Enoch. But the fact that Jude includes in his epistle a well-known saying attributed to Enoch does not mean he ascribes canonicity to the apocryphal book that includes the same saying.

What is more, to quote from an apocryphal book does not necessarily ascribe canonicity to it. Paul refers to a rabbinical midrash in 1Cor 10:4, a heathen poet in his speech at Athens (Acts 17:28) and names the magicians who withstood Pharaoh as Jannes and Jambres (2Tim 3:8), evidently drawn from some non-canonical source, but his Epistles are not for that reason regarded as of inferior value as inspired literature.²

¹ Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction* (Inter-Varsity Press, 1970), p. 906.

² *Ibid.*, p. 919.

Who was Jude?

- The opening of the Epistle of Jude identifies him as “Jude, a bond-servant of Yeshua Messiah, and brother of James....”

There seems, therefore, no reason to suppose that this Jude was other than the Lord’s brother. In fact, although kinship with Christ was not stressed as a qualification of importance in the New Testament era, Christians would undoubtedly treat the Lord’s brethren with respect, and this would account, not only for the authority with which Jude writes, but also for the wide regard which the Epistle gained in the Christian Church.³

The Value of the Epistle of Jude

- It seems clear that in our modern times, the Epistle of Jude is often neglected in the Church, being rarely preached upon or studied as a whole. But it is clear that Jude intends to identify those with evil practices who will receive divine judgment for their ungodly deeds. Thus he gives examples from Israelites, Sodom and Gomorrah, Cain, Balaam, and Korach, and if these examples had relevance in Jude’s day, they most surely should remain relevant in our times!

“As long as men need stern rebukes for their practices, the Epistle of Jude will remain relevant. Its neglect reflects more the superficiality of the generation that neglects it than the irrelevance of its burning message.”⁴

Outline of the Epistle of Jude

I. *Greeting, vv. 1–2*

Those who are “called” are therefore “beloved” and “kept.”

II. *The Reason for Writing, vv. 3–4*

It appears that Jude had it in his heart to write a doctrinal treatise, but was led by the Ruach rather to warn the believers that their faith was being undermined by ungodly persons, who were immoral and were denying Yeshua as the true and promised Messiah.

III. *Reminders from the Past: Disregarding God’s Torah Brings Judgement, vv. 5–7*

- A. Unbelieving Israelites
- B. Fallen Angels
- C. The People of Sodom and Gomorrah

IV. *The Ungodly Persons, vv. 8–19*

- A. Insubordination to authority contrasted by the archangel Michael in his dispute with the devil over Moses’ body. (vv. 8–10)
- B. Insubordination is pictured as the behavior of irrational animals.
- C. Greed for power or control is paralleled to the stories of Cain, Balaam, and Korach (v. 11)
- D. Striking metaphors given to describe such ungodly persons
 1. hidden reefs, without fear, caring for themselves.
 2. clouds without water, carried along by winds.
 3. autumn trees without fruit, doubly dead, uprooted.
 4. wild waves of the sea, casting up their own shame like foam.
 5. wandering stars (planets that cannot be used for navigation) for whom the black darkness has been reserved forever.

³ Guthrie, *Ibid.*, p. 908.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 928.

V. *Exhortation to Believers*, vv. 20–23

- A. must be built up in the faith - (the faith as it is taught in the Scriptures)
- B. known for praying by means of the Ruach's leading - ("praying by means of the Spirit")
- C. demonstrating a life kept by God's love
- D. awaiting God's mercy (appropriating His hope and strength to walk as His beloved children)
- E. helping those who are weak in the faith (those who waver)
- F. snatching some out of danger (lovingly rebuking those who are drawn to a sinful life)
- G. showing mercy to each other (able to forgive one another; not engaging in destructive gossip)
- H. having a God-given hatred of the defilement of the world

VI. *Doxology*, vv. 24–25.

- A. Praise to God for His sovereign grace in preserving all who are His by faith in Yeshua
 - 1. He keeps you from stumbling
 - 2. He causes you to stand in His presence blameless (fully forgiven)
 - 3. He gives great joy (no condemnation)
- B. Praise to God for His eternal greatness
 - 1. He is the one and only God Who is our Savior
 - 2. Salvation is only through Yeshua Messiah our Lord
 - 3. To God belongs all
 - a. glory - our praise
 - b. majesty - being in awe of His greatness
 - c. dominion - submitting every aspect of our lives to Him
 - d. authority - affirm Him as our ultimate and final authority
 - 4. Such praise to the one true God is
 - a. from all eternity - we join the angelic host when we praise God
 - b. continuing in earth's history - we are united as God's people in our praise
 - c. forever in the world to come - we will praise God throughout eternity