



# Midweek Study

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# God's Amazing Book

Journey Through the New Testament

## CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH

A Quick Look at the General Epistle of Jude

*"A dog barks when his master is attacked. I would be a coward if I saw that God's truth is attacked and yet would remain silent." – John Calvin*

*"A clash of cymbals! A boom of tympani! A cannon blast and a cascade of fireworks! That is what the letter of Jude is like. The words of this apostle thunder from the pages." – Ray C. Stedman*

Jim George writes, "Although Jude had earlier rejected Jesus as the Messiah, he, along with his other three half-brothers of Jesus, was converted after Christ's resurrection. Because of his close family relationship with Jesus and because he was an eyewitness of Jesus' life, ministry, and resurrection, Jude has a burning passion for the salvation that comes in Christ. But as he writes, he transitions to a matter that is heavy on his heart at this time. Jude is intensely concerned about the threat of heretical teachers in the church and the response that Christians should have concerning this threat. Therefore, Jude seeks to motivate his readers to wake up from their complacency and take action against false teachers."<sup>1</sup>

Mark Dever writes, "The word for 'contend' is the word from which we get our word 'agonize.' It is a strenuous, athletic word. You might think of some sporting event you like. Perhaps you have a favorite player. Imagine how your favorite player looks at the high point of the game or match, straining with every nerve and muscle in the body. Now, says Jude, we are to do that for the faith. **Contend for the faith not because it is familiar or traditional or conservative. Contend because it is true and it is essential.** When I first became a Christian, I loved the song "I Have Decided to Follow Jesus," particularly the line that says, 'Though none go with me, still I will follow.' We must have such a determination for the truth. I am determined to contend for the truth of the faith once for all delivered. I contend first with myself but also with my family. I contend among my friends and in my church. I contend in our community and in our convention of churches. As God gives me opportunity, I will contend in our nation and in our world."<sup>2</sup>

What value do you place on God's Word? God's church? God's people? Today, as in years gone by, many false teachers have infiltrated our churches, Bible colleges, and Christian institutions. What price are you willing to pay to defend God's truth? Are you ready to stand with Jude and "contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (verse 3)? If so, then you stand with Jude in the long line of faithful Christian soldiers who have answered the call and are fighting the good fight of faith as they engage the forces of evil for the souls of men.

### Fast Facts on JUDE

**Written by?** Jude (Heb., Judah; Gk. Judas)

**Written when?** AD 65-90

#### Written why?

- To encourage sound doctrine (3)
- To encourage believers to contend for the once for all FAITH (3)
- To warn of the danger of false teaching (4, 5-23)
- To assure believers of their eternal security in Christ (24-25)

<sup>1</sup> Jim George, *The Bare Bones Bible Handbook*, 287

<sup>2</sup> Mark Dever, *The Message of the New Testament*, 522-523.

## **THE SKELETON<sup>3</sup>**

### **Verses 1-4 The Reason for Writing**

In light of those who are denying Christ and **using the grace of God to justify immoral behavior**, Jude writes this timely word of rebuke and warning.

### **Verses 5-16 The Danger of False Teachers**

Jude begins this section by reminding his readers that false teachers will meet their doom just as three other groups in the Old Testament met theirs: Contentious unbelievers who died in the wilderness; fallen angels who cohabited with women before the flood and who are in chains until judgment; and men who exhibited homosexual behavior and were destroyed in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

False teachers are characterized by Jude as being ruled by their flesh, rejecting authority, and reviling angelic beings.

Jude compares false teachers to three spiritually rebellious men in the Bible-Cain (from Genesis), and Korah and Balaam (from Numbers)-and says their evil is likened to hidden reefs, airy clouds, uprooted trees, wild waves, and wandering stars. Jude affirms the judgment of God upon these ungodly men.

### **Verses 17-25 The Duty to Fight for God's Truth**

After exposing the behavior of false teachers, Jude now addresses his readers and reminds them that others have warned about these men. He exhorts them to protect themselves against this onslaught of apostasy by building themselves up in the Scriptures, praying consistently in the Spirit for God's will, and looking for Christ's second coming. In the process of fighting for God's truth, they are to show compassion to those who deserve it and, if necessary, to pull others out of the fires of apostasy with great fear of personal defilement. Jude then returns to the theme of salvation that he mentioned at the beginning of his letter. He closes with one of the most often-cited doxologies in the Bible (verses 24-25), emphasizing the power of Christ to preserve His followers from being overpowered by the enemy.

## **THINGS TO REMEMBER ABOUT JUDE<sup>4</sup>**

1. Jude is one of only two New Testament books written by a brother of Jesus (James).
2. Jude is the only book in the Bible solely devoted to the subject of apostasy.
3. Jude has more non-canonical references (three) than any other New Testament book (v. 9, the Assumption of Moses; vv. 6, 14-15, book of Enoch),
4. The book of Jude, along with Hebrews and 2 Peter, makes more references to Jewish history than any other New Testament book.
5. There are approximately a dozen groups of triads in this brief epistle (v. 1: called, sanctified, and preserved; v. 8: defile, reject, and speak evil, and so on).
6. Jude addresses the most general audience of all the New Testament Epistles (v. 1).
7. Only Jude and 2 Peter contain Scripture references to fallen angels being chained (Jude v. 6; 2 Peter 2:4).
8. Only in the epistle of Jude is Michael referred to as an archangel (v. 9). No other archangels are mentioned as such in Scripture.
9. Jude's epistle is very similar in content and theme to 2 Peter 2, and he apparently continued the previous warnings of Peter (vv. 17-18).
10. In many ways, Jude is the "book of Judges" of the New Testament.
11. Jude has often been referred to as "The Acts of the Apostates."

## **LIFE LESSONS FROM JUDE<sup>5</sup>**

1. As long as Satan is alive and well, false teachers will threaten the church with error. Do what you must to know the truth.
2. Mark it well: One of the revealing characteristics of a false teacher is fearless, ungodly behavior.
3. False teachers act as if God will not punish their godless behavior.
4. Genuine servants of God will faithfully point to Christ with their words and their conduct.
5. **Complacency is not an option for Christians. You are to earnestly contend for the faith.**

<sup>3</sup> George, 287-288

<sup>4</sup> Jeff Lasseigne, *Highway 66* (Santa Ana, CA: Calvary Chapel Publishing, 2004)

<sup>5</sup> George, 287-288