

THE LETTER OF JUDE

The writer of this letter can be identified with reasonable certainty as **Judas**, son of Mary and half-brother of Christ. Humbly, he does not ‘pull his rank’, but calls himself the servant (actually, slave) of Jesus, and brother of James (another member of Jesus’ family). He had originally intended, he says, to write an essay about the principles of salvation, but decided to shelve that project because something more urgent had cropped up – a departure from the true gospel. There are similarities and even overlaps between Peter’s second letter and Jude’s, but there is an important difference. Peter had warned of a coming apostasy (abandoning of the original gospel). As Jude writes, that apostasy has already come. His letter is full of counter measures to expose and undo the influence of bad men who have wormed their way into the church.

There have always been those, he begins, who challenged the authority of God’s appointed leaders. He lists examples such as **Balaam**, who tried to thwart God’s blessing of Israel his people because he was greedy for money (Jude 1:11), and **Korah**, who rebelled against Moses.

There was also **Tattenai the Governor** who opposed the building of the Temple by

Joshua the High Priest (this obscure reference in Jude 1:9 takes us to Zechariah 3:1, 2; the Greek word for ‘body’ of Moses can mean ‘servant’, and Moses’ servant was a man called Joshua). Jude uses a string of poetic similes for these evil men – hidden reefs which wreck a ship, shepherds feeding themselves instead of the flock, and comets, which have no fixed place in the sky. He recalls one of the earliest prophecies ever written – the prediction by Enoch, who lived in the seventh generation from Adam, that one day God would bring a terrible judgement on such ungodly men (Jude 1:14). The first fulfilment of Enoch’s words would have come in the Flood of Noah, but there was still a future application, which would put these pretend apostles behind bars.

The overall theme, in verse three, is an appeal to “*contend earnestly for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints*”. As with Paul, Peter and John, Jude insists that the gospel cannot be altered to suit human whims or passions. The things we must believe are enshrined in the New Testament documents, and are not negotiable.

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