An Overview Of The Book Of Jude

Writer Of The Letter Of Jude:

"Jude, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, and a brother of James," Jude 1.

The Jude who wrote this letter was not an apostle. In the opening address of verse 1 he did not identify himself as an apostle. In fact, in Jude 17 he distinguished himself from the apostles and clearly did not include himself among their number. The writer, then, was not the apostle who was known as "Jude, son of James" (see Luke 6:16; Acts 1:13), whose name was also Thaddaeus (see Matthew 10:3; Mark 3:18).

Not being an apostle, the writer clarified he was the Jude who was the brother of James. His brother James was the well-known and recognized head of the church in Jerusalem, the writer of the Letter of James, and a brother of the Lord Jesus Christ (see Galatians 1:19; Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3). For more information about James, see the Overview of The Book of James in The Book of James. By identifying himself as the brother of James, the writer Jude made himself readily recognizable to his readers.

Being a brother of James, Jude was also a half-brother of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is named as a brother of Jesus in Matthew 13:55 and Mark 6:3. During the three years of Jesus' public ministry, Jude did not believe that his brother Jesus was the Christ and Son of God. His brothers James, Joseph, and Simon did not believe this about Jesus either (see John 7:3-5). Jude, like his brothers and sisters, thought Jesus was out of his mind and had lost his senses (see Mark 3:21).

Jude did not likely become a believer in Jesus until after Jesus had risen from the dead. What led Jude to his conversion is not known. Since Jesus appeared to his brother James (see 1 Corinthians 15:7), perhaps James was instrumental in Jude's conversion. In any case, Jude, as well as his brothers Joseph and Simon, became a missionary who traveled about to spread the gospel of Jesus (see 1 Corinthians 9:5).

Other than these scanty facts, little more is known about the life and work of Jude, except that he was married and that his wife accompanied him on his missionary journeys (see 1 Corinthians 9:5).

The content of Jude's letter reveals certain traits of his Christian character. He was zealous for the gospel and teachings of Jesus Christ, for the Church, and for preserving the true Christian faith and life (see Jude 3, 4, 17, 19-21, 24-25). He was clearly agitated with the false teachers who had secretly crept into the Church to turn the grace of God that forgives sins into a freedom and license to commit immoral acts and to sin all the more (Jude 4). Jude was not a man to mince words. He forcefully exposed the false teachers as godless men (Jude 5), blemishes (Jude 12), ungodly individuals who were guilty of ungodly acts and words which were done in an ungodly manner (Jude 15), grumblers and faultfinders and boasters and flatterers (Jude 16), mockers (Jude 18), and divisive individuals who were without the Spirit of God (Jude 19).

Through his blistering condemnation of the false teachers in his letter shines Jude's love and pastoral concern for his fellow Christians' faith and salvation. He was concerned that they be preserved from falling prey to the immoral teachings in their midst, and that those who had fallen for it be delivered from it (Jude 20-23). He called on his fellow Christians to fight for the faith entrusted to them (Jude 3). He built them up for the battle they were to wage against the false teachers by holding before them the love of God who would keep them in Jesus Christ for their eternal salvation (Jude 1, 24).

Recipients Of The Letter Of Jude:

"To the called who have been loved in God the Father and have been kept for Jesus Christ," Jude 1.

This opening address does not identify who the original recipients were. The lack of information about Jude's life and work makes it impossible to determine whom the Christian recipients were and where they were located. It appears that Jude may have known the recipients for some time. Three times he addressed them as dear friends, or beloved (Jude 3, 7, 20). In Jude 3 he stated that he had been making all haste to write some kind of a document for them about their common salvation. Perhaps he had a longstanding relationship with the recipients that went back to one of his former missionary journeys, of which Paul wrote about possibly as many as twenty years or more earlier (1 Corinthians 9:5), though this is pure speculation.

From the fact that Jude stated his readers were familiar with certain facts of Old Testament history, and that he also made use of statements from the apocryphal books with which the Jews were familiar, some scholars have speculated that the recipients of the letter were Jewish Christians. This, however, cannot be ascertained with any degree of certainty either.

Date And Place The Letter Of Jude Was Written:

So little is known about the life and work of Jude that the date and place of writing cannot be established. Jude 17 suggests the letter was written after the time the apostles had preached and/or written to the recipients. This should not be understood to mean that all the apostles were dead when the letter was written, however; for the apostle John, for one, was still living and working in Ephesus at the time the letter is thought to have been written. But some of the apostles, with whom the recipients were familiar, might have died before Jude wrote his letter. Paul is believed to have died a martyr's death in A.D. 68. Peter is thought to have suffered martyrdom about a year earlier in A.D. 67. A date that has been suggested for the writing of the Letter of Jude is around A.D. 70 and possibly as late as A.D. 80.

Occasion Of The Letter Of Jude:

Jude wrote the letter in response to certain false teachers who had infiltrated the Church with their heresy that God's grace gave Christians the freedom to commit immoral acts and to sin all the more.

Purpose Of The Letter Of Jude:

Jude's purpose was to expose the false teachers and their sexual immorality, to urge the members of the Church to fight for the faith that had been entrusted to them, and to encourage the members to extricate those in their midst who had fallen prey to the sexual immorality.

Content Of The Letter Of Jude:

The Letter of Jude bears a striking resemblance to the second chapter of the Second Letter of Peter. Scholars have asserted that either Jude borrowed material from Peter or that Peter borrowed it from Jude. If Peter borrowed from Jude, as a number of scholars have been said to suggest, then Jude would have had to write his letter before Peter wrote his second letter. Yet it is generally thought that the Letter of Jude was written later, about A.D. 70, than the Second Letter of Peter, which was written around A.D. 66 to A.D. 67. If Jude's letter was indeed written after Peter's second letter, Jude is more likely to have borrowed from Peter than is Peter to have borrowed from Jude. It has been stated, and perhaps correctly so, that the false teachers Peter foretold would arise in the Church Jude later proclaimed had infiltrated the Church (compare 2 Peter 2:1-3 and Jude 4).

Jude is also said to have borrowed material from two apocryphal books, namely from "The Assumption of Moses" (Jude 9) and from "The Book of Enoch" (Jude 14, 15). Neither are inspired Scriptures. Thus, it is evident that the Holy Spirit through his inspiration, which filters out all inaccuracies and incorporates only what is the truth, had Jude make use of these two factual statements. Jude's use of the two apocryphal statements in no way implies the two apocryphal books should be considered on a par with the inspired Old Testament Scriptures. Scholars have noted that Paul also quoted from the pagan poets when their statements fit the point he was making (see Acts 17:28; 1 Corinthians 15:33; Titus 1:12).

Theme Of The Letter Of Jude:

Fight For The Faith That Was Once For All Entrusted To The Saints, (see Jude 3).

Jude

Part 1: Greeting Jude 1, 2

¶ 1 Jude, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, and a brother of James;
To the called who have been loved in God the Father and have been kept for Jesus Christ:
¶ 2 May mercy and peace and love be multiplied to you.

Part 2: The Sin and Judgment of Ungodly Men Jude 3-16

A. The Theme and Reason of the Letter Jude 3, 4

¶ 3 Beloved, while making all haste to write to you about our common salvation, I found myself compelled[1] to write to you and urge *you* to keep fighting for the faith that was once for all handed down to the saints.
4 For certain men have slipped in by stealth, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who pervert the grace of our God into unbridled lust and who deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

B. Three Reminders of the Lord's Just Punishment Jude 5-7

¶ 5 I wish to remind you, though you know all *these* things, that after the Lord once for all brought his people safely out of the land of Egypt, in the second place destroyed those who did not believe;
6 and angels who did not keep their sphere of authority but deserted their own habitation, he has kept in everlasting bonds under *the* blackness *of hell* for judgment on the Great Day;
7 just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, in the same manner as these men, indulged themselves fully in illicit sexual intercourse and went after a different kind of flesh, are set forth as an example of undergoing the punishment of eternal fire.

C. A Description of the Immoral False Teachers Jude 8-16

¶ 8 Yet in like manner also these dreamers for one thing defile flesh, and secondly reject authority, and furthermore slander glorious angelic beings. [2]
9 But Michael, the archangel, as long as he continued disputing with the devil and repeatedly argued about the body of Moses, did not dare to pronounce a slanderous judgment, but said, "May the Lord rebuke you!"
10 But these men, to be sure, slander what things they do not understand, and what things they are acquainted with by instinct, like unreasoning beasts, by these things they are destroyed.
11 Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, they have given themselves over to the error of Balaam for wages, and perished in the rebellion of Korah.
12 These men are the hidden reefs in your love-feasts while they feast shamelessly with you, looking after themselves. *They are* clouds yielding no rain, carried away by winds; autumn trees without fruit, having been uprooted – twice dead.
13 *They are* wild waves of the sea splashing up their own shameful deeds like foam; wandering stars for whom the outer darkness [3] has been reserved forever.
¶ 14 Moreover, Enoch, the seventh generation from Adam, also prophesied about these men, saying, "Behold, the Lord came with tens of thousands of his holy angels[4],
15 to carry out judgment on[5] all and to convict all the ungodly[6] for all of their ungodly deeds which they had committed in ungodliness and for all the harsh things which ungodly sinners had spoken against him."
16 These men are grumblers, fault-finders, living according to their own evil desires, and their mouth speaks arrogant things, flattering others for the sake of their own advantage.

Part 3: Remember the Words of Jesus' Apostles Jude 17-19

¶ 17 But as for you, beloved, remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ,
18 that they used to say to you, "In the last time there will be mockers, living according to their own ungodly lusts."
19 These men are the ones who cause divisions, *men* of animal appetites, not having a *regenerated* spirit.

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[1] Lit I had compulsion

[2] Lit. glories

[3] Lit. blackness of darkness; see Mt.8:12; 22:13; 25:30

[4] Lit. holy ones

[5] Lit. against

[6] "All the ungodly" reading follows the Nestle Greek text

Part 4: Take These Two Courses of Action Jude 20-23

20 But as for you, beloved, by building yourselves up on your most holy faith, by praying in the Holy Spirit,
21 keep yourselves in the love of God as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ for eternal life.
22 And time and again have mercy on some who are doubting,
23 time and again save others by snatching them out of the fire, time and again have mercy on others in fear, hating even the under garment[1] that has become spotted by the flesh.

Part 5: Closing Doxology Jude 24, 25

¶ 24 Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to make you stand blameless with extreme joy in the presence of his glory,
25 to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, *be* glory, majesty, power, and authority, before the world began and now and into all eternity. Amen.

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[1] Lit. tunic; an undergarment worn next to the skin