

# Jude

Jude originally intended to write on the theme of salvation. But because of pressing threats to his readers, he turns his attention instead to those who would seek to destroy the gospel. The dangers of false doctrine and rebellion are not new in the history of God's dealings with men. How then can a believer resist such onslaughts? By "building yourselves up in your faith and praying in the Spirit" (v. 20).

## INTRODUCTION

Fight! Contend! Do battle! At the beginning of his letter Jude focuses on the believers' common salvation, but then feels compelled to challenge them to contend for the faith. The danger is real. False teachers have crept into the church, turning God's grace into a license to do as they please. Jude reminds such men of God's past dealings with unbelieving Israel, disobedient angels, and wicked Sodom and Gomorrah. In the face of such danger Christians should not be caught off guard. The challenge is great, but so is the God who is able to keep them from stumbling.

## AUTHOR

The author identifies himself as "a servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James" (v. 1). This designation, combined with the reference in verse 17 to the apostles, makes it unlikely that this is the apostle Jude, called "Judas the son of James" in Luke 6:16 and in Acts 1:13. This leaves the traditional view that Jude was one of the Lord's brothers, called Judas in Matthew 13:55 and Mark 6:3. His older brother James was the famous leader of the Jerusalem church (Acts 15:13-21) and author of the epistle that bears his name. Like his brothers, Jude did not believe in Jesus before the Resurrection (John 7:1-9; Acts 1:14).

The Greek title *Iouda*, "Of Jude," comes from the name *Ioudas* which appears in verse 1. This name, which can be translated Jude or Judas, was popular in the first century because of Judas Maccabaeus (d. 160 B.C.), a leader of the Jewish resistance against Syria during the Maccabean revolt.

## DATE & SETTING

Jude's general address does not mark out any particular group of readers, and there are no geographical restrictions. Nevertheless, he probably had in mind a specific region that was being troubled by false teachers. There is not enough information in the epistle to settle the question of whether his readers were predominately Jewish or gentile Christians (there was probably a mixture of both). In any case, the progress of the faith in their region was threatened by several apostates who rejected Christ in practice and principle. These proud individuals were especially dangerous because of their deceptive flattery (v. 16) and infiltration of Christian meetings (v. 12). They perverted the grace of God (v. 4) and caused divisions in the church (v. 19).

Because of the silence of the New Testament and tradition concerning Jude's later years, we cannot know where this epistle was written. Nor is there any way to be certain of its date. The probable range is A.D. 66-80.