

DISCOVERY SERIES

# The Danger of False Teachers

## Insight From Jude



**BILL CROWDER**



*introduction*

# The Danger of False Teachers

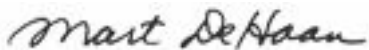
Insights From Jude

**W**hat is the **biggest threat** to the church today? Do the most serious dangers lurk in the culture? Or perhaps somewhere closer to home?

One of the shortest books of the Bible gives us an answer to those questions. Jude, the 26th book of the New Testament, sounds an alarm about false teachers that Christ repeated in His last words to the church (REV. 2:1–3:22).

In the following pages, Bill Crowder, Associate Bible Teacher for RBC Ministries, focuses on 25 often overlooked verses of the

Bible that no member of the church can afford to ignore. Jude's wise counsel can help us recognize the danger among us.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Martin R. De Haan II". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name "Martin" and last name "De Haan" clearly legible.

MARTIN R. DE HAAN II

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Managing Editor: Tim Gustafson  
Cover Photo and Design: Terry Bidgood  
Interior Design: Steve Gier

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one

# Jude: A Letter of Wisdom

(Verses 1-3)

**T**he first-century Roman world resembled the religious pluralism of our day in many ways. Numerous gods and various religious groups competed for the allegiance of the populace. In this setting the first followers of Christ talked to one another about the dangers of abandoning the truth their Teacher entrusted to them.

One of the philosophies vying for the loyalty of those early Christians was a form of Gnosticism. The name comes from the Greek term *gnosis*, meaning knowledge, and represents a belief system that promotes the idea of a secret knowledge reserved for insiders. But Gnosticism's attributes hold several problems for the church.

**1. Gnostics** claimed a secret knowledge that undercut the good news that was publicly declared and openly debated.

**2. Gnostics** gave their members a license to sin by emphasizing a spirituality that diminished the importance of what we do with our bodies.

**3. Gnostics** viewed Christ as more like an angel than a member of the Godhead.

Today, Gnostic ideas are again resurfacing. The battle for the truth of Christ is as real today as in the first century.

Jude sounded the alarm over false ideas about God and spirituality. His brief letter carried a message to the ancient church *that today's church is wise to heed.*

What can we learn from this small letter? Let's begin by meeting the man who penned it.



## The Letter's Author

► *Jude, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James.*  
(v.1a)

In the Greek, the name "Jude" is actually "Judas." Translators have used the name *Jude* to avoid association with Judas Iscariot.

Jude refers to himself in verse 1 as "a bondservant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James." Five men with that name are listed in the Bible: Judas Iscariot; Judas of Damascus (ACTS 9:11); Judas Barsabbas (ACTS 15:22); another disciple (JN. 14:22); and one of the Lord's earthly brothers (MT. 13:55-56).

The Judas of Matthew 13:55-56 is the most likely author. There, Judas is described as the brother of James *and*

*Jude could have been the ultimate name-dropper by calling himself the "brother of Christ" . . . Instead he declared himself a bondservant of Jesus.*

Jesus. This link makes Jude's self-description in verse 1 as a servant of Jesus Christ very telling. He could have been the ultimate name-dropper by calling himself the "brother of Christ" or the "brother of the Son of God." Instead, Jude declared himself a bondservant of Jesus. What humility—from unbelief (JN. 7:5) to spiritual service!

## The Letter's Recipients

► *To those who are called, sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ. (v. 1b)*

From his first words, the author made it clear that his warning is not for outsiders. It's a letter to people Jude described as:

**"Called"**—The apostle Paul reflected on this term in 2 Timothy 1:8-9, where he wrote, "Share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began."



*The bestselling novel **The Da Vinci Code** is one of several misleading books alleging that a group of Gnostic manuscripts found in Nag Hammadi, Egypt, give us a more reliable account of the real Jesus than the Gospels of the New Testament.*



Jude further identified the recipients of his letter as:  
**"Sanctified"**—This word comes from the Greek term for "holy" and describes people uniquely set apart for God's own purposes.

Next, Jude described his readers as:

**"Preserved"**—Secured by Jesus Christ Himself! The Greek word for "preserved" means "to stand guard over." Jesus employs the same word in his high-priestly prayer: "Holy Father, keep [preserve] through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are" (JN. 17:11).

## The Letter's Greeting

► *Mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you. (v.2)*

"Mercy and peace" was a common Jewish greeting, but the addition of "love" made it distinctively Christian. These terms are used elsewhere in the New Testament to describe God's love and care for His children:

**"Mercy"**—"That He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory" (ROM. 9:23).

**"Peace"**—"Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (JN. 14:27).

**"Love"**—"Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us" (ROM. 5:5).

It was because Jude shared God's love for his readers that he was intent on



warning them of the present and future danger from false teachers.

## The Letter's Purpose

► *Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. (v.3)*

Apparently Jude had intended to write about the joys and benefits of salvation. But as he began, he sensed the Holy Spirit steering him to write on the dangers of false teachers. Recent statistics show an alarming worldwide growth in high-profile religious cults. This is a disturbing trend. False gospels are almost always marked by additions to the truth of the Scriptures, a low view of Christ, and a denial of the value of His sacrificial death for all who trust Him.

The phrase "common salvation" in verse 3 is not referring to salvation as though it is a common thing. Rather, it describes salvation as something able to be received by all. We



*Bible teacher Matthew Coder wrote that people will name their sons Peter or Paul and their dogs Nero or Caesar—but no one would name a dog **Judas**. A name that means "praise" has been lost to us because of one man's treachery.*

***Jude is telling his readers that they are to fight for the faith that has been delivered to them.***

are recipients of the one salvation, found only in Christ.

But Jude had more pressing things in mind. He urged his listeners to respond to their salvation by earnestly contending for the faith that had been "once for all delivered" to them through Christ. The word rendered for "contend earnestly" in the NKJV is only used one time in the New Testament. The idea behind the Greek word is to exert intense effort on behalf of something.\* Jude is telling his readers that they are to fight for the faith that has been delivered to them.

But we must contend for the faith without being contentious. Remember Paul's warning to Timothy: *A servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition (2 TIM. 2:24-25).*

The world is full of false teachers who want to rewrite the message of Christ's love. Let's not help them by misrepresenting the spirit of the gospel.

The word translated *delivered* clearly communicates that "the faith" has been delivered *to* them, not earned *by* them. It carries with it the idea of something that has been entrusted or given over to another. It is a gift that is given, not a wage that is earned.

Jude agreed in principle with another apostle who wrote: *The things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier (2 TIM. 2:2-4).*



two

## A Need for Understanding (Verses 4-16)

**T**he lengthiest section of this letter gives us a variety of angles from which to view and understand the seductive methods of dangerous religious leaders.

### The Problem of False Teachers

► *Certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men . . . (v.4a)*

#### WHO THEY ARE

These false teachers didn't announce their presence. Instead, they entered with deception about their real mission and their actual message.

Jude also said that these false teachers "long ago were marked out for this condemnation." The word for "marked out" means "written beforehand." Different

forms of this Greek root word appear five times in the New Testament and they always refer to a true event that has been clearly written, communicated, or vividly described in the past (GAL. 3:1; ROM. 15:4; EPH. 3:3; JUDE 4).



The "condemnation" Jude spoke of is a legal term describing a pronounced verdict or a decision rendered by a judge.\* The idea associated with the term "ungodly men" is not one of religious neutrality but obstinate opposition. These men actually opposed God. Jesus described this type of person as tares sown among the wheat (MT. 13:36-43). They look and act like the real thing for a time, but eventually they are revealed for what they truly are. Jude is telling his readers that God, the righteous Judge, has already reached a verdict concerning them. They are guilty. Next, Jude will explain the specific nature of their guilt.

## WHAT THEY DO

► *...who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ. (v.4b)*

These false teachers "turn the grace of our God into lewdness." They take the liberty that is ours in Christ and turn it into a license to sin. While legalism is equally wrong, Jude reminds us that false teachers are often guilty of going in the opposite direction, using the grace and forgiveness of God to justify ignoring His commands. Paul wrote: *What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not!*

***These false teachers didn't announce their presence. They entered with deception about their real mission and their actual message.***

*How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? (ROM. 6:1-2).*

Lawlessness, rooted in rejection of biblical standards, is a common characteristic of false teachers. Paul says that false teachers in the "last days" will bear this mark. *Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction (2 TH. 2:3 NASB).*

In this statement two concepts are linked—*apostasy* and *lawlessness*—and they feed each other. A lack of respect for biblical truth ("the faith which was once for all delivered") creates lawlessness, which leads to falling from the truth of Christ.

The methods of these false teachers Jude is warning of is also the primary plan of attack that the false teachers of the last days will utilize. One Bible teacher described the strategy of the false teachers portrayed in Jude 4 this way:

- Penetration of the church ("crept in unnoticed")



The phrase **"crept in unnoticed"** is interesting. Vincent's Word Studies indicates that it means "to come in through the side door."

- Prostitution of grace ("turned the grace of our God into lewdness")
- Departure from truth ("[denied] the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ").

Tragically, these false teachers do more than bring harm to themselves. They damage the reputation of Christ and His church by working their way inside and among the people of God: "They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work" (TI. 1:16).

Because this is an "inside job," Jude warned his readers to be spiritually alert—watching and wary—and to grow in the truth of the Person and work of Christ. This is our defense against the false teachers.

## Three Examples of False Teachers

Jude cited three stories his readers were familiar with.

### THE UNFAITHFUL PEOPLE OF ISRAEL

► *But I want to remind you, though you once knew this, that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe. (v.5)*

The Lord had saved them out of Egypt—parting the Red Sea, supplying manna, bringing water from the rock, and providing passage over the Jordan. But despite such miracles Israel did not stay true to their God.

Even pagan neighbors remembered what the God of Israel had done for His people in bringing them out of Egypt (JOSH. 2:1-13). But God's chosen nation wandered in a wilderness for 40 years until a whole generation died

without seeing the Promised Land. They failed to trust and remain true to the God who had done so much for them. They repeated the error of angels who fell from their heavenly place.

## REBELLIOUS ANGELS

► *The angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day. (v.6)*

While there is much speculation and hypothesizing about the exact meaning of this passage, Jude's point outweighs any speculation. He wanted his readers to understand that even angels who had known the presence and service of God were not above rebelling against the Almighty. How much more urgent for us, fallen mortals, to be alert and on guard against the possibility of falling, especially in light of the presence of the corrupting influence of false teaching!

## SODOM AND GOMORRAH

► *As Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh,*



Verses 5-11 set forth three sets of **triplets** that describe false teachers. The first set illustrates the false teachers' rejection of God. The second set exposes their active disobedience, and the third predicts their awaiting judgment.



*are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. (v.7)*

The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah resulted from a pattern that has often shown up among the people of God. The sexual perversion and violence of the notorious "twin cities" didn't just happen. It was the result of self-centered patterns of behavior that violated the creative design of God (see EZEK. 16:49-50).



In the sexual immorality that grew out of Sodom's self-centeredness, they lusted after "strange (*heteros*, 'other') flesh (*sarkos*, 'physical body, people, human')." When these two Greek words appear together they form an idiomatic phrase that means "to engage in unnatural sexual intercourse." As a result, they suffered divine judgment and were used as an example here in Jude (see also GEN. 19). The lesson learned here is that when anyone, whether Jew or Gentile, human or angel, follows false teaching and subsequently denies God and rejects Jesus Christ that individual stands guilty and can anticipate judgment.

## THE CONDUCT OF FALSE TEACHERS

► *Likewise also these dreamers defile the flesh, reject authority, and speak evil of dignitaries. Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!" (vv.8-10)*

Jude identified the false teachers as "dreamers" and then described their conduct. They "defile the flesh," a phrase that not only describes the moral corruption among false

***These false teachers do more than bring harm to themselves. They damage the reputation of Christ and His church.***

teachers but one that also describes a person who pollutes other members of the community (see 2 PET. 2:1-2).

They "reject authority." Those who reject the authority of the Bible often reject those who have been put in place by God to protect and lead them. This Greek phrase can be taken to mean that these false teachers refuse to recognize the one who is Lord. They are not just rejecting the *message* of the Lord but the Lord *Himself* (JUDE 4).

They "speak evil of dignitaries." In verse 9, Jude gave a specific example of this kind of evil speaking by describing a fascinating event: *Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!"*

While there have been a number of options put forward for how to understand this passage, the important question is: Why does Jude mention this account here? Jude references the dispute over Moses'



*Whenever the archangel **Michael** is mentioned in the Bible, it is always in times of spiritual conflict (DAN. 10:13,21; 12:1; REV. 12:7-9).*

body in connection with speaking evil of dignitaries. But why would Satan want Moses' body, and how does that relate to evil speaking?

The best answer ties it directly to the issue of blasphemy, which leads to idolatry. Satan's main goal is not to get people to worship him but to get people to worship anything or anyone but the true God. Satan likely wanted the Israelites, who had honored Moses in life, to worship him in death. In fact, what Satan was unable to do with Moses' body, he later did with the brass serpent (see NUM. 21:5-9 and 2 KI. 18:4).

The point of Jude's reference seems to be that people who wander from the truth end up worshiping things other than the true God. Putting themselves above all else, they foolishly disrespect the power of an evil enemy and even the authority of God.

*But these speak evil of whatever they do not know; and whatever they know naturally, like brute beasts, in these things they corrupt themselves. (v.10)*

Jude's point is that "these" (the "dreamers" of v.8) do against God what Michael would not even do against Satan. Notice how Jude described these dreamers:

- They "speak evil of whatever they do not know."
- Whatever they know (instinctively) "they know naturally" (by sin nature).
- They are "like brute beasts" (without reason).
- "They corrupt themselves."

## THE JUDGMENT OF FALSE TEACHERS

► Jude's evaluation was to mourn: *Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily in the error*

*of Balaam for profit, and perished in the rebellion of Korah. (v.11)*

Amazingly, they do all this in the face of the One who loves them and gave Himself for them—the One who is “not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2 PET. 3:9).

## The Portraits of False Teachers

Jude used everything at his disposal to unveil the real character and agenda of false teachers. Here he turns his attention to nature. In verses 12-13, he used five word-pictures to describe false teachers.

► *These are spots in your love feasts, while they feast with you without fear, serving only themselves. They are clouds without water, carried about by the winds; late autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, pulled up by the roots; raging waves of the sea, foaming up their own shame; wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever. (v.12-13)*

The early church met together regularly to celebrate the Lord's Supper and share a common meal called the “Love Feast.” The more affluent members of the church shared their abundance of food with the less fortunate. But the false teachers



The threefold error of apostasy in verse 11 is a **powerful contrast** to John 14:6, where Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.”



Some Bible versions use the phrase “hidden reefs” for “**spots** on your love feasts.” It is also a word that refers to dangerous undersea reefs that could shipwreck a sailing vessel. Either way, these false teachers were endangering the church with their selfishness (serving only themselves).

spoken of in verse 12 cared only for themselves, gorging themselves and leaving nothing for others. (The church in Corinth experienced a similar problem with their meals, see 1 COR. 11:20-22.)

Next, Jude called them "clouds without water." They were like clouds that promised refreshing rain but delivered nothing. They were useless because they themselves didn't have the water of life (JN. 7:38-39).



Jude then used the picture of "late autumn trees without fruit." A fruit tree that fails to deliver a harvest is useless to its owner and must be plucked up by the roots to make room for productive trees. False teachers produce no good fruit because they are spiritually dead. And they are described as "twice dead," because someday they too will be "pulled up by the roots." Jesus said, "Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted" (MT. 15:13).

Next, Jude described false teachers as "raging waves of the sea." They promise powerful ministry but rant and rave without form or content, "foaming up their own shame." This is not cleansing foam but rather is the result of turmoil and brings about pollution. The metaphor parallels the warning of Isaiah 57:20, which says, "The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt."

Finally, Jude compared these false teachers to "wandering" or shooting stars. They are lawless and directionless; they do not follow the natural pattern for stars.

As a result they have a reserved judgment of eternal darkness waiting for them.

How is the church to respond to these dangers? The apostle Paul responded with a broken heart and with the Word of God's grace, which both builds up and gives an

***People who wander from the truth  
end up worshiping things other than  
the true God.***

eternal inheritance (ACTS 20:31-32). But for those who reject the authority of God and the person of Jesus, only judgment remains.

## **The Destiny of False Teachers**

► *Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him." (vv.14-15)*

Here Jude referred to an extra-biblical account to make his point.

Enoch's prophecy pointed forward to a time of judgment—the last days and the



Enoch named his son **Methuselah**, which has been translated "when he is dead, it shall be sent." "It" apparently was the judgment of Noah's flood.

return of Christ. When Christ returns, He will come with "ten thousands of His saints" (see REV. 19:11-14) to establish His kingdom on the earth, a kingdom that He will rule for a period of 1,000 years (see REV. 20:4-6). At the conclusion of the 1,000-year kingdom, Jude confirms Enoch's prophecy that Christ will "execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly."

The key English word in verse 15, used four times, is "ungodly." It is used to translate the Greek words *asebeia*, *asebeo*, and *asebes*. These three words have the general meaning of "godlessness," with *asebeia* and *asebeo* giving more force to ungodly practices while *asebes* focuses on the state of living without religious beliefs. The former deals mainly with *doing* things that are ungodly while the later focuses on *being* ungodly.



The force of using this illustration lets us know that Jude considers these "dreamers," who have infiltrated the church, to be evil. They are not just people who participate in ungodliness, they are themselves ungodly.

## The Tactic of False Teachers

► *These are grumblers, complainers, walking according to their own lusts; and they mouth great swelling words, flattering people to gain advantage. (v.16)*

Jude offers yet another description of these dangerous spiritual leaders. First, they are "grumblers." The word *grumble* refers to a discontentment that produces rebellion. This action is seen in Israel's grumbling against God (NUM. 14:2; 1 COR. 10:10), the crowd grumbling against Christ (JN.

6:41,61), and the church grumbling against the apostles (ACTS 6:1-2). Grumbling creates an environment of discord and dissension that makes the community of faith vulnerable to disruption.

Jude also described them as "complainers," a word that connotes the idea of blaming. Many people blame others for their lot in

***Grumbling creates an environment of discord and dissension that makes the community of faith vulnerable . . .***

life. In the Bible, we see this blame-shifting from the very beginning. Adam blamed Eve (and God), and Eve blamed the serpent for their sinful choices (GEN. 3). We have been blame-shifting ever since.

Next, false teachers are seen as "walking according to their own lusts." This speaks of people habitually driven by their own desires. It is a self-destructive characteristic can only be overcome through the power of the Holy Spirit. Paul wrote, "Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh" (GAL. 5:16).

Additionally, false teachers "mouth great swelling words." They speak eloquent but seductive words—words that Shakespeare



would describe as being "full of sound and fury, signifying nothing." Again we see parallels to 2 Peter, which uses the same Greek idiom to describe false teachers: *For when they speak great swelling words of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error (2:18).*

One expression of these grand words is "flattering people to gain advantage." These false teachers cater to their hearers rather than speak the truth. This contrasts with true teachers of God's Word, who are devoted to speaking the truth in love rather than seeking the favor of public opinion. Paul warned against the flattering speech of false teachers when he wrote: *Preach the Word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. (2 TIM. 4:2-4)*

Spiritual leaders who want to faithfully represent their Lord must constantly remind themselves that their commitment is to the Word of God, not to flowery speech or ear-tickling strategies. With gratefulness for what God has done for us in Christ, we need to share the heart and mind of Jude—for the sake of God and others.



three

# A Strategy for Believers

(Verses 17-23)

**J**ude's "owner's manual" for living in the truth consists of seven simple instructions that form a practical strategy for living in the face of spiritual pressure and false teaching.

## Remember the Words of the Apostles

► *But you, beloved, remember the words which were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. (v.17)*

Jude commanded his readers to remember the apostles' words, which repeatedly predicted the apostasy of false teaching (ACTS 20:29; 1 TIM. 4:1; 2 TIM. 3:9, 4:3-4; 1 JN. 2:18). These warnings have been left to all believers for our understanding and protection.

## Recognize the False Teachers

► *How they told you that there would be mockers in the last time who would walk according to their own ungodly lusts. These are sensual persons, who cause divisions, not having the Spirit. (vv.18-19)*

Jude took painstaking measures to help the church recognize false teachers and spiritual impostors. Here he synthesizes the biblical information to give a final inspired portrait of them.

These counterfeit messengers are "mockers" who use ridicule as a weapon. "Mockers" describes those who are not just unbiblical but decidedly *antibiblical*. They "walk according to their own ungodly lusts." Instead of being spiritually minded, they are deceptive, self-centered, and manipulative. Their priority is to satisfy themselves at all costs.

Continuing his description of false teachers, Jude indicated that they are "sensual persons." The word translated "sensual" describes unspiritual behavior or something not of the spirit, and is a profound contrast to true believers, described in 1 Thessalonians 5:23, "May the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." False teachers are wholly given over to self, but true believers are to be wholly given over to Christ.

In addition, they "cause divisions."



- Romans 16:17 warns us to take note of divisive people in the church.
- First Corinthians 3:3-4 shows a church divided by "personality cults."
- Philippians 4:2 addresses a division between individuals within a church.



*This term is also seen in 2 Peter 3:3 ("**scoffers**"), where the target of their mockery is the Bible's teaching about divine judgment and the second coming of Christ to the earth.*

This is why the Bible says we are to "[endeavor] to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (EPH. 4:3). The result of that kind of unity is that the world sees Christ as the Son of God, the church as the beloved of God, and the gospel as the message of salvation.

Jude's last statement in verse 19 summarizes the false teachers by revealing them

***These counterfeit messengers are "mockers" who use ridicule as a weapon . . . Their priority is to satisfy themselves at all costs.***

as "not having the Spirit." They are spiritually lost. This is made clear in Romans 8:9, where Paul wrote: *If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ (NIV).*

Once again, the true character of these false teachers is exposed for all to see. Now we are challenged to respond.

## Build Yourself Up

► *But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith. . . (v.20a)*

First of all, Christians are to "[build] yourselves up on your most holy faith."

Jude's words mirror Paul's challenge in Acts 20:32, "I commend you to God and to the Word of His grace, which is able to build you up."



## Pray in the Holy Spirit

► *...praying in the Holy Spirit. . . (v.20b)*

We pray this way because of the futility of trying to function in our own strength. This is especially true here, because prayer is the response of the heart that realizes its need of God's power.

Even our prayers are dependent on Him. Paul wrote: *The Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God. (ROM. 8:26-27)*

## Abide in the Love of God

► *...keep yourselves in the love of God. . . (v.21a)*

In John 15:4, Jesus described Himself as the vine and believers as the branches connected to the vine. We are instructed to "abide" in His love.

***We are also called to reach out to others, balancing compassion with the need for caution.***

We must be careful not to follow the example of the church at Ephesus who left their first love (REV. 2:4). Christ's love for us deserves a response that is abiding, faithful, and obedient.

## **Look for Christ's Return**

► *... looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. (v.21b)*

This seems to be a reference to the any-moment return of Christ for His church (see TI. 2:13). When we live in anticipation of Christ's return, we will long for and live in the light of Christ's promised return. As John wrote, "Everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure" (1 JN. 3:3).

## **Reach out to those in Spiritual Danger**

► *And on some have compassion, making a distinction; but others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh. (vv.22-23)*



*There is a difference of opinion among translators of verses 22-23. Because of some difficulties in the Greek text, some commentators see two groups of people in these verses while others see three. Either way, Jude challenges his readers to reach out to those affected by false teaching and to respond with compassion, urgency, or fear.*

Our response is not only personal. We are also called to reach out to others, balancing compassion with the need for caution. The following categories help us understand those we are to reach out to.

**Sincere Doubters.** The phrase "making a distinction" in verse 22 is better translated "those who doubt." Such people may be Christians who are weak in their faith and easily swayed by false teaching.

**Unbelievers in Danger.** The people in this group are already committed to false teaching and in danger of becoming even more entrenched.

**Defiled and Persistent Sinners.** This group is the most dangerous. It includes those who are flagrant in their sinful lifestyle or who are false teachers themselves. Those who reach out to people in this group should be spiritually mature and aware of the potential dangers (see vv. 8-10).



*four*

## **A Call to Worship** (Verses 24-25)

**J**ude ended his letter the same way that he began it—by giving words of assurance to those who know the Savior.

Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to God our Savior, who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen.

This great doxology shows that the people of God need not stand in their own strength. God alone has the power to protect us from ourselves and to preserve our eternity. He is determined to present us “faultless” and will do this in His own glorious presence, with great joy. This is the same joy that compelled Christ to go to the cross on our behalf (HEB. 12). It is Christ’s work on



the cross that makes our forgiveness and transformation possible.

Centuries before Jude lived, Jeremiah quoted the Lord as saying, "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, nor let the rich man glory in his riches; but let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me" (9:23-24).

Our response is to worship our God. We acknowledge His "glory" (honor and esteem), "majesty" (praise for God's matchless attributes), "dominion" (recognition of His right to rule), and "power" (God's omnipotence and lordship).

We are not just to celebrate God's greatness forever in the future, but also now, in our everyday lives. Let's respond to His provision by glorifying Him each day by the way we live.

In a day of false teachers, there is no substitute for embracing the God of all truth. If you do not have a relationship with God, you can know Him today. Place your faith in Jesus Christ as your Savior—the living Truth in a world dominated by error.

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\* Greek definitions taken from:

Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition.), New York: United Bible Societies, 1996.

and

\* G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley & G. Friedrich, Ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (electronic ed.), Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964.



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