

Jude study 1 (verses 1 to 4)

Who is Jude?

Many commentators think that Jude is an abbreviation of Judas (the change of name is in all likelihood to not confuse with the other Judas), which makes him a brother of James (Matthew 13: 55 & Mark 6: 3) and so a brother or half-brother of Jesus! Yet he only refers himself as a servant of Jesus and makes no attempt to take an exalted position.

What do we know of the context?

It is clearly a letter written from a strong Jewish perspective. There is a clear expectation of a familiarity of Hebrew Scriptures and associated teaching material. Interestingly, he seems to be addressing the flip side of the same issue as James, the leader of the early church (Acts 15). If James had to address the issue of legalism (adherence to the Law is of greater importance than a relationship with the Lord) Jude addresses libertarianism (adherence to the Lord means there are no requirements on how we live). Both then are addressing the issue of the balance and right approach to Grace and Law; or put another way, God's Blessings to us in Jesus and how we live as a result of these blessings.

Unlike some of the other New Testament writers, Jude isn't addressing the challenge to the church from the outside, but the challenge from the inside. This isn't a doctrinal challenge (people are not believing the right things about Jesus) rather that it is through the way they live, that they are challenging the faith, as this will ultimately lead people to believe different things about the good news of Jesus. Implicit then in Jude is the question "what point is there in proclaiming a message of forgiveness, mercy and peace if we are all already acceptable to God as we are?" which leads to the belief that coming to Jesus doesn't require in us change in our lives to bring it in conformity with his Word.

Looking at Jude 1 to 4

- What do we know about Jude from v1 and from Matthew 13:55 and Mark 6:3?
- How is the Christian described in v1 and what strikes you as unusual about this list compared to how believers might normally be described?
- How are false teachers described in v4 and how do vv14-19 help us to make sense of what is happening?
- Jude links the receiving of grace by the sinner to leading a new life of obedience to Jesus. Why does a failure of obedience lead to denying Jesus as our only sovereign and Lord?
- What are we told by Jude about the Christian faith in verse 3? Can we still hold on to this when we "know so much more" than people did then?
- Given Jude's context, what do you think he means by urging the believers to contend (v3)?

Applying the teaching of Jude to our own lives

- In what ways should the listing v1 be an enormous encouragement to us in our daily Christian lives?
- There is an expectation that grace leads to obedience. What are the reasons why we struggle so much with the concept of obedience to God?
- In what ways do we deny the sovereign lordship of Jesus in our own lives and our own church?
- How do we hold onto the idea of the faith being "entrusted to all of us" alongside new ideas and insights into our faith? How do we hold on to what is good and right?
- How willing are we to hold on to the authority of God's word in matters of life and faith? Where also do we look for the values we live by?
- Would it really matter if nobody contended for the faith?