

THE LETTER OF JUDE^a

Greeting

¹From Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ, James's brother, to those who are loved by God the Father and kept safe for Jesus Christ. ²May mercy, peace and love overflow for you!

The Danger of False Teachers

³Dear friends, I've been trying to write you as quickly as I can^b about our common salvation. I've felt compelled to write you, to urge you to strive on behalf of the faith. That faith was handed over to the holy ones once for all. ⁴But^c certain people have sneaked in—the scripture said long ago that they'd come to this judgment. ^dThey're irreverent. They turn the grace of our God into a license for promiscuity.^e And they deny our only Ruler and Lord, Jesus Christ.

⁵But I want to remind you of something—although you've known all this since the beginning. Jesus^f saved a nation out of Egypt, but later destroyed the people that didn't believe. ⁶And consider the angels that didn't keep to their own realm of authority, but left their own domain. He has kept them in permanent chains, deep in the darkness, for the great day of judgment. ⁷And think of^g Sodom and Gomorrah, and the surrounding towns. They did the same thing. They were committing sexual immorality and going off into perversion.^h They provide an example of the penalty of eternal fire.

^a Many—but not all—Bible scholars think that this letter is pseudonymous—that is, they think it shows signs of having been written by someone else using Jude's name. Pseudonymous writings were pretty common in the ancient world.

^b Lit. "I'm making all haste to write to you".

^c Lit. "For".

^d Lit. "those long ago written beforehand to this judgment," or, "those long ago marked out for this judgment". I think he's talking about them being predicted in the scriptures.

^e Or "into licentiousness".

^f Many mss have "the Lord". But although a copyist might well think that "Jesus" had to be some kind of mistake, and try to correct it by turning it into "the Lord," there's no reason for "the Lord" to be changed to "Jesus".

^g "And think of": lit. "Similarly".

^h Lit. "going off after strange flesh". See Gen. 19:4-25.

ⁱ Lit. "by experiencing".

Like them, these dreamers pollute their bodies and ignore authority. And they insult angelic beings.^a But even the archangel Michael, when he was arguing with the devil about Moses' body,^b didn't dare to lay an insulting judgment on him. Not at all. He said, "May the Sovereign One rebuke you!"^c But these people don't even know what they're insulting. And what they know instinctually, like unreasoning animals, is what destroys them.^c It's going to be bad for them!^d Because they've chosen^e the path of Cain.^f They've plunged into the error of Balaam's^g bribe.^h They've been destroyed in Korah's rebellion.ⁱ These people are hidden reefs^j in your love feasts.^k They eat alongside you, fearlessly looking out for their own interests. They're clouds without rain,^l swept around by the wind. They're trees with no fruit in autumn^m—twice dead, uprooted. They're wild waves of the ocean, foaming with their own shameful behaviors.ⁿ They're wandering stars. The deepest darkness has been reserved for them for the coming age.^o

In the seventh generation from Adam, Enoch^p prophesied about them. He said,

I saw the Sovereign One coming,^q
 With tens of thousands of God's holy ones—^r
 Coming to render judgment on all people,
 And to pay back all the ungodly,
 For all the ungodly things that they had done,
 And for all the harsh things that ungodly sinners had said against God.^s

^a Lit. "And they insult glories".

^b Jude is probably referring to a passage in a non-biblical book called *The Assumption of Moses*.

^c Lit. "...animals—by these they are destroyed". I can't tell if Jude is saying they will be destroyed by following their own "animal instincts," or whether they will be destroyed by the hostile angelic beings that they insult in their beast-like ignorance.

^d Traditionally: "Woe to them!".

^e Lit. "walked".

^f See Gen. 4:3-8.

^g Prn. *bay-lam*'s.

^h See Num. 22:7; 31:16.

ⁱ See Num. 16:19-35.

^j Or "These people are stains".

^k This may be a way of referring to the community's celebrations of the Lord's Supper (e.g. 1 Cor. 11:17-34).

^l Lit. "waterless clouds".

^m I.e. the season for fruit trees to bear their fruit.

ⁿ Lit. "their shames".

^o Or "...for them forever". Lit. "for/into the coming age". This is a "forever" that is ahead in time, not a "forever" that refers back in time.

^p Prn. *ee-nok*.

^q Traditionally: "Behold, the Lord came". He's describing a vision.

^r The Greek word translated as "holy ones" here would traditionally be translated as "saints"; but in this context it probably means holy angels.

^s Enoch 1:9; see also Enoch 60:8. Enoch is a non-biblical book.

¹⁶These people are grumblers, complainers. They live on the basis of their own obsessions.^a They talk big. They pretend to be in awe of important people, in order to advance themselves.^b

Hold Fast and Build One Another Up

¹⁷But as for you, dear friends, remember the things that were prophesied by the apostles^c of our Lord Jesus Christ. ¹⁸Because they told you: “In the final time there are going to be people mocking the faith,^d who live on the basis of their own ungodly obsessions.”^e ¹⁹They’re people who cause splits in communities, operating in their own strength because they don’t have the Spirit.^f ²⁰But as for you, dear friends, keep building each other up in your holy, holy faith. Be praying in the Holy Spirit. ²¹Keep yourselves in the love of God, as you look forward to the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. ²²Have mercy on some people who are doubting. ²³Save others by snatching them out of the fire. Have mercy on still others, yet be afraid—hate even their clothes that have been contaminated by sin.^g

Final Prayer of Praise to God

²⁴Glory to God, who^h is able to protect you from falling down—who’s able to make you stand without guilt in front of the glory of God with a shout of joy. ²⁵Glory, greatness, power, and authority to the One God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord—from before all time, and now, and to all eternity.ⁱ Amen.

^a Or “lusts”. Jude probably refers here not just to lust (i.e. obsessive desire) for pleasure—sexual or otherwise—but also to lust for wealth, power, and position.

^b Lit. “They speak pompous things, being in awe of personages for the sake of advantage”.

^c See “Bible Words”.

^d Lit. “mockers,” or “people who make fun”. He appears to be saying that their behavior “makes a mockery” of the faith because it is the opposite of Christian behavior.

^e Or “lusts”.

^f Lit. “These are those who cause divisions, soulish, not having the Spirit”.

^g Lit. “On others have mercy with fear, hating even the undergarment stained by the flesh”. I think Jude is appealing to the metaphor of someone having a highly infectious illness. Despite being committed to helping them recover, you’d be extremely reluctant to touch something “with infection on it”. There are a number of small variations in the ancient mss of vv. 22-23. It’s possible that none of the existing mss reflects exactly what was originally written.

^h Lit. “And to the One who”. This is Jude’s final doxology, a final burst of praise to God.

ⁱ Lit. “before every age, and now, and for all the ages”.