

XIV. Hey Jude!

April 6/8/9, 2020

Jude 1-2

Aim: To introduce the epistle of Jude and apply it to a modern audience.

Gardner: Although this book takes the form of a letter, it is very carefully crafted using traditional rhetorical devices, so that Jude, in effect, writes a sermon to his friends.

Benton: Looking at this letter through modern eyes, we are struck by a number of rare features. Perhaps the most obvious is the close similarity between Jude and 2 Peter. At first glance the parallel seems so close we might wonder why Jude's letter was necessary at all. It seems almost to be a duplicate of a large section of Peter's material. Then the next thing which strikes us strange is Jude's near obsession with angels.... In this short letter of just twenty-five verses, there are at least four separate references to angelic beings (vv. 6, 8, 9, 14).... A further peculiarity, which particularly jars in the minds of evangelical Christians, is the fact that twice Jude quotes from extra-biblical Books. In verse 9, he alludes to what scholars say is the lost ending to an inter-testamental book called *The Assumption of Moses*. Later in verses 14 and 15, he cites the beginning of a similar work, this time *The Book of Enoch*.... Though Jude quotes from them, the church has always rejected them from inclusion within the canon of Scripture. The question arises: 'Why has Jude chosen to use these works?'

MacArthur: Jude's concise letter is a forceful condemnation of the false teachers who were infiltrating the church in his day, and, by extension, all who were yet to come. In our post-modern culture, in which truth is considered relative and tolerance is prized above all else, Jude's eloquent plea for doctrinal purity is particularly applicable.

A. Author (Jude 1a)

1. Jude the Obscure

¹*Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James...*

Moo: The name 'Jude' occurs in most English versions only in Jude 1 in the New Testament. In fact, however, the Greek word behind our English Jude (*Ioudas*) occurs forty-three other times—usually translated 'Judah' (to refer to the Old Testament patriarch or to the territory that takes its name from him) or 'Judas.' The latter name usually denotes Judas Iscariot, Jesus' betrayer, but there are references also to four other men named Judas: 'Judas the Galilean,' an infamous revolutionary (Acts 5:37), 'Judas son of James,' one of the Twelve (Lk. 6:16; Acts 1:13); 'Judas, also called Barsabbas,' an early Christian prophet (Acts 15:22, 27, 32), and a brother of Jesus named 'Judas' (Mk. 6:3). [DSB note: see also Judas of Damascus in Acts 9:11].

MacArthur: The New Testament list eight men named Judas ('Jude' is an English form of the Greek word 'Judas,' which translates the Hebrew name 'Judah'). The name was extremely popular, both because of Judah, the founder of the tribe of Judah, and because of Judas, the hero of the Maccabean revolt against the Greek ruler Antiochus Epiphanes in the second century BC.... Two of the disciples, for example, were named Judas—Judas Iscariot and Judas, son of James (Lk. 6:16; Jn. 6:71; 14:22; Acts 1:13). The apostle Paul, shortly after his conversion, met Ananias at the house of a Judas of Damascus (Acts 9:11). And Judas Barsabbas, a leader in the early church, joined Paul, Barnabas, and Silas in carrying a letter from the Jerusalem Council to

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the believers in Antioch (Acts 15:22-33). There was even a Judas of Galilee, who founded the Zealots and led an uprising in early first-century Palestine (Acts 5:37).

Gardner: The Greek of verse 1 says: ‘Judas, servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James.’ Traditionally, in English this Judas has been known as Jude presumably originally so no one would mistake him for the Judas who betrayed Jesus. However, there are a number of men in the New Testament called Judas, so it is important to identify, if we can, who the author of this letter actually is. Two serious contenders emerge. The first is Judas, the son of James, who was one of the twelve apostles and is mentioned in Luke 6:16 and Acts 1:13. He was also known as Thaddeus (see Mt. 10:3). The second is Judas, the brother of James and (half) brother of Jesus, who is mentioned in Matthew 13:55 and in Mark 6:3.

a) *Brother of James*

MacArthur: Of the eight mentioned in the New Testament, only two are associate with a man named James (v. 1), and hence plausible candidates to have written this epistle: the apostle Jude, and Jude the half-brother of the Lord. The apostle Jude can be ruled out, since he was the *son*, not the *brother* of a man named James (Luke 6:16; Acts 1:13). Further, if Judas the son of James were the author, he would have identified himself as an apostle, since he was one. The writer of Jude, however, distinguished himself *from* the apostles (v. 17).

Gardner: If Jude had been an apostle, we might have expected he would mention the fact. Not only does he not do so, but in verse 17 he seems deliberately to separate himself from the apostles. It thus seems that he cannot have been the apostle Judas, also known as Thaddeus. It does appear, then, that this Jude has to have been the Judas who is mentioned as the Lord’s brother in Mathew 13:55 and Mark 6:3, where we find that another brother was called James. Jude says he is ‘a brother of James.’ The Lord’s brothers were not members of the original twelve apostles though James, the Lord’s brother, later took on an apostolic role in his position as leader of the church in Jerusalem (Acts 15:13; Gal. 1:19). He would thus have been well-known specially among Jewish Christian communities.

Moo: The James Jude mentions is almost certainly the man who became a prominent leader in the early church (see Acts 15:13-21; 21:18; Gal. 2:9) and who wrote the letter we now have in the New Testament. And this James was ‘a brother of the Lord’ (Gal. 1:19; see also Mk. 6:3/Mt. 13:55; Jn. 7:5).

MacArthur: The James with whom Jude identified himself was the Lord’s brother (Gal. 1:19), the head of the Jerusalem church and the author of the epistle of James. After the martyrdom of the apostle James (Acts 12:2), there was no other James in the early church who could be referred to simply by name without further qualification. Thus Jude, like James, was one of the half-brothers of Jesus (Mt. 13:55). Jude is the only New Testament writer who identifies himself by family relationship.

Helm: During these ancient times the James with the strongest affiliation with the decidedly Christian material in Jude was James the Just, leader of the church in Jerusalem (see Acts 15)... In the letter to the churches in Galatia, the Apostle Paul refers to this James as ‘James the Lord’s brother’ (Gal. 1:19). Interestingly, when we canvass the Gospels for Jesus’ family, we find James listed, and not only him but one by the name of Jude as well (Mk. 6:3)... Jude, the writer of this letter, is the younger brother of James and blood relation to Jesus Christ. If so, he comes from the family of first rank in the early Christian church. Describing himself as the brother of

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James is an effort to distinguish him from others by the same name and thereby make his own identity readily known.

Benton: There is only one Jude in Scripture who has a brother named James.... There is only one person in the New Testament church whom everyone would know as just ‘James’ without any ambiguity, and that was James the brother of Jesus (Gal. 1:19).... This is the Jude, or Judas, who was part of the earthly family of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is mentioned in Mark 6:3 (see also Mt. 13:55).... The writer of this epistle is probably this same man, who had been brought up alongside Jesus.

MacArthur: His close relationship to both Jesus (as a half-brother) and James certainly gave Jude a position of prominence and authority in the early church—a platform from which he could address the dangers of false teaching. It is ironic that in God’s providence the Holy Spirit chose a man with the same name as Judas Iscariot, the most infamous apostate of all time (Acts 1:16-20, 25), to write the New Testament epistle on apostasy.

b) *Servant of Jesus Christ*

Moo: ‘Servant’ can also be translated ‘slave’—the Greek word is not *diakonos* (‘[household] servant’) but *doulos* (‘[bond]slave’). The word obviously indicates Jude’s subservience to the Lord whom he has come to know and to whom he now gives himself in service. But the title also carries honor. The great leaders of God’s people in the Old Testament were also called ‘servants’ of God such as Moses (Jos. 14:7; 2 Kgs. 18:12) and David (Ps. 18:1; Ez. 34:23).

MacArthur: Jude introduced himself as ‘a bond-servant of Jesus Christ,’ indicating that the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ had transformed his heart. He went from being an unbeliever (cp. Jn. 7:5) to being ‘a bond-servant’ (*doulos*, ‘slave’), one who trusted Christ as his Lord and Master. Accordingly, his saving relationship to Christ became more important than family ties (cp. Mk. 3:31-35). Thus, Jude chose to humbly call himself Jesus’ ‘bond-servant’ rather than note the more impressive fact that he was Jesus’ half-brother.

Gardner: The word we translate as ‘servant’ can be more accurately understood as ‘slave’ (*doulos* in Greek). Jude speaks out of an age in which slavery was well known. Many of the new Christians in the early church were slaves and slaves would have been seen walking the streets of any town in the Roman Empire of those days. Jude is therefore making a serious claim. Jesus had talked of how a person can be a ‘slave to sin’ (Jn. 8:34), as did the apostle Paul in Romans 7:14. Christians have been redeemed from this slavery by the death of the Lord Jesus; they have now been ‘set free’ by Jesus (Jn. 8:26). But Jude knows that the perfect freedom that is now his in Jesus involves accepting Jesus as *Lord and Master*. In one of the great paradoxes of the Christian life we discover that true freedom and enjoyment of life are found in total submission to the Lord, that is, in being ‘a slave of Jesus Christ.’ As we shall see in verse 4, it was this that the false teachers had not grasped, but for Jude it underlies his whole life and teaching.

MacArthur: In the Greco-Roman world slavery was widespread, making the familiar New Testament designation ‘bond-servant’ (cp. Rom. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; 2 Pe. 1:1) very significant. It denoted being owned and rendering absolute, selfless submission to someone, in this case to Jesus as Lord. In this letter such identification is especially fitting because it sets Jude in sharp contrast to the apostates. He was a grateful, willing slave of the Lord Jesus Christ, whereas the apostates denied Christ’s lordship through their overtly sinful lifestyles (v. 4; cp. 2 Pe. 2:1).

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Moo: Like Paul (cp., e.g., Rom. 1:1) and Peter (2 Pe. 1:1), who do the same thing, Jude uses this title to establish his right to address Christians with an authoritative word from the Lord. He does not write as simply a fellow Christian, but as one who serves and therefore represents Jesus Christ Himself. Significantly, unlike both Paul and Peter, Jude does not call himself an ‘apostle.’

Benton: He calls himself ‘*a servant of Jesus Christ.*’ The brothers of Jesus were not generally known as ‘apostles’ in the early church. So, Jude simply calls himself ‘a servant.’

MacArthur: Little is known about Jude apart from this epistle. According to 1 Corinthians 9:5 he was married and had an itinerant ministry as an evangelist. Church history relates the story (possibly legendary) of how Jude’s grandsons were brought before the Roman emperor Domitian. The emperor questioned their loyalty because they were descendants of the Davidic royal line. But upon learning that they were simple farmers, the emperor contemptuously dismissed them (Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History*, 3.19-20). Apart from that account, tradition is silent regarding Jude.

2. Jude, Not “Pseudo” Jude

Benton: Many modern scholars try to argue that this is only who the writer of the letter *claimed* to be. They say in fact it was written by some other anonymous Christian who simply used Jude’s name in order to lend more weight to his letter. The technical term for this is ‘pseudepigraphy’. But such ideas should be viewed with great suspicion by Bible-believing Christians as, not to put too fine a point on it, this would mean that this letter which calls others to contend for the truth would itself be based on a lie.... Scholars who argue for pseudepigraphy put forward the idea that it was a well-known and perfectly acceptable way of writing in the early days of Christianity. But the flaw in this idea is seen as we read Paul’s comments in 2 Thessalonians about those who had circulated letters under his name. There were people who put around letters using Paul’s name and caused great mischief by so doing (2 Th. 2:2). Paul’s reaction was not to condone the practice, but to try to ensure that the churches knew how to identify letters which had genuinely come from him (2 Th. 3:17). We can properly surmise that Paul viewed such lack of integrity with horror.

MacArthur: Some critics deny that Jude the brother of James wrote this epistle, claiming there is internal evidence that the book dates from after his lifetime.... It is highly unlikely that a forger would write a book impersonating a relatively unknown figure such as Jude; pseudoepigraphic works were attributed to well-known apostles such as Peter or Paul. Nor would a forger pretending to be Jude have failed to identify himself as the Lord’s brother.

MacArthur: Other unbelieving critics insist that the Greek of the epistle is too good for a simple Galilean peasant to have composed it. But ... Galilee was near the predominantly Gentile region known as the Decapolis, which was east and south of the Sea of Galilee. There is also evidence that Greek was commonly spoken throughout Palestine in the first century.... Thus, dogmatic presumptions regarding Jude’s competency in Greek (or lack thereof) are simply unwarranted.

3. Jude Lessons

a) *An Example of Humility*

Benton: If Jude is the half-brother of Jesus Christ, why doesn’t he say so straight out? ... First, Jude recognizes that *physical ties of blood and genetics are of no eternal worth.* Spiritual ties with Jesus are what saves us. It is faith which trusts and submits to Jesus as his servant which

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unites us to the Savior (cp. Mk. 3:32-35)... Second, it is not only the priority of spiritual ties which shapes how Jude introduces himself; *humility* is also involved. Humility forbids Jude from mentioning himself as a physical half-brother of Jesus. Joseph was Jude's father, but it was by the power of the Holy Spirit that the child Jesus was conceived in Mary's womb. Jesus is the eternal Son of God become a man. Knowing that Jesus is Lord and God, Jude does not want to give any impression of being equal with Jesus. Announcing himself as being from the same family as Christ could be misunderstood in such a way and Jude wishes to avoid that... But here too in Jude's family connection with the Lord Jesus Christ we can find wonderful encouragement in our faith. The holy Son of God did not falter from coming alongside sinners... Jude himself had rejected Jesus for years and yet Jesus did not reject him. The astonishing truth of the gospel is that God actually does love sinners.

Moo: But if Jude was then himself a brother of the Lord Jesus, why does he not mention this when he identifies himself? An early Christian theologian, Clement of Alexandria, thought that Jude may have deliberately avoided the title given to him by believers, 'brother of the Lord,' in favor of a title that focused on a point of greater significance for his ministry and for his right to address other Christians: 'servant of the Lord.' This is probably on the right track. Like James in his own letter, Jude sees no point in claiming a physical relationship to Jesus that brought him no spiritual benefit and that did not give to him any special authority.

MacArthur: Jude's deep humility is reflected in the fact that he, like his brother James (cp. James 1:1), referred to himself as a 'bond-servant of Jesus Christ' rather than 'the brother of Jesus.' Like his other brothers (including James), Jude did not believe in the deity and messiahship of Jesus until after the Resurrection (Jn. 7:5; Acts 1:14; cp. 1 Cor. 15:7, where 'James' may be the Lord's half-brother). After the resurrection, Jesus' relationships with His siblings changed from brother to Lord and Messiah (cp. Mk. 3:32-35; Jn. 2:4).

Helm: Here is a great and comforting truth, one worth stopping to observe. *The people closest to Jesus are happy to call themselves servants...* Jude identifies himself as Jesus' servant. He is modeling Christian maturity for every reader – strikingly by the third word in the English text. That he does so with such matter-of-fact joy ought to be encouraging. Never think it wrong or demeaning to identify yourself as one under authority. There is great sweetness in living by God's design.

b) *An Encouragement to Us*

Benton: Jude and James provide encouragement for us. After all, these two, along with other half-brothers and half-sisters of Jesus, lived in the same house with, and grew up alongside, Jesus. Yet, living alongside God incarnate himself, they were unconverted for years (Jn. 7:5).

Benton: Do your best to living lovingly and consistently for Christ, but don't blame yourself if your loved ones are not yet saved. People's hearts are hard. The devil has sadly blinded the minds of unbelievers (2 Cor. 4:4) and it takes the miracle of new creation to enable them to see the truth. It was not until after Christ's death and the infallible proof of the resurrection that Jude and his brothers and sisters came to faith. It is only after the Lord Jesus had risen and ascended into heaven that we find the members of his family gathered for prayer with Christ's disciples (Acts 1:14).

Benton: Jude was unconverted for years. Though the Lord Jesus had turned the water into wine at the family wedding at Cana, though he had healed the sick and fed the thousands, none of this had touched Jude's heart and brought salvation. Somehow, he had explained it all away... But

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eventually Jude was converted. Eventually the evidence of the life of Jesus did begin to weigh with him. Eventually God did work in his life through the family crisis of Jesus' death and the marvelous miracle of His resurrection. In that there is encouragement for those of us with unconverted loved ones to keep praying and keep witnessing. Do not give up. Do not despair.... The brothers of Christ were eventually born again.

B. Audience (Jude 1b-2)

1. Their Location

Helm: With the phrase 'to those' we are wonderfully joined to the invigorating realization that Jude's letter was intended for many people. No single person is listed, nor is the letter limited to a particular church. Jude wrote for masses of men and women and perhaps even a multitude of churches.

Moo: To whom was Jude writing? The evidence points to a Jewish-Christian community in a Gentile society. Jude's quotations from Jewish non-canonical books suggests that his audience was Jewish in background. But the libertine lifestyle of the false teachers is more associated with Gentiles than with Jews. Probably, then, these false teachers are either themselves Gentiles or have been influenced by Gentiles.

MacArthur: The specific church or churches to which Jude addressed his epistle are not known. In light of his choice of illustrations from the Old Testament and the Jewish apocrypha, his readers were likely predominantly Jewish believers.

Gardner: As we read Jude it will become clear that Jude and his audience had a good general knowledge of Jewish teaching and traditions. Jude knew the Hebrew version of the OT as well as the Greek translation and was able to make his own translations (e.g., compare verse 12 with Proverbs 25:14; also verse 13 with Isaiah 57:20). Jude writes in a 'Jewish' way. He makes his points by referring to a biblical text or story and then expounding it. This style would be most suitable if the people he was writing to came from a Palestinian Jewish background.

Gardner: References to angels, Michael, Satan, and a preoccupation with the relationship between events in heaven and events of earth, all of which can sound somewhat strange to our ears, would have been common-place in early Palestinian Jewish Christianity. In using these ideas in his teaching, Jude is following Jewish prophetic and 'apocalyptic' traditions. Just where these Christians to whom Jude was writing lived is an open question, though from the above we may be right to assume the church was made up largely of converted Jews. However, given the way outside false teachers had managed to gain entrance they probably found themselves living among pagans. Some commentators have plausibly suggested the recipients may have been a church in Syria, but because Jude tells us so little, we cannot be certain about this.

Moo: Where was this Jewish Christian community located? We simply cannot know. Paul's reference to the 'Lord's brothers' in 1 Corinthians 9:5 suggests that Jude may well have traveled extensively in the eastern Mediterranean world, and there are many locales that fit the circumstances of the letter.

2. Their Description (1b)

...to those who are called, beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ:

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MacArthur: Jude’s salutation clearly outlines that he was writing to genuine believers. His greeting emphasizes the reassuring truth that as believers contend with growing apostasy; they remain safe and secure in the sovereign purposes of God.... Jude encouraged his audience to trust in God even in the midst of intense spiritual battles.

Gardner: Jude does not mention where they lived or even whether he had a hand in founding their church. Rather, he is concerned to emphasize their position before God. These people to whom he is urgently writing are Christians because of the work of God Himself.... It is said by some that every good sermon has three points! Jude certainly uses repetition and groups of three words to impress truth upon his readers. Here is the first such group of words: ‘called, loved, kept.’ Each individual word is important and full of wonderful biblical truth, but first we need to understand the general impact of what Jude is saying. In reading this sentence through again, we will see that it creates a general impression of *protected privilege*.... These people were facing serious issues and, if they veered from the truth. They were in danger of being judged by God. They were going to be asked to ‘contend for the faith,’ but they needed to know the base from which they could do that. Jude reminded them that their success in contending for the faith was in God’s hands, for he had called them, loved them, and kept them.

Benton: You will notice that Jude uses a triplet in his description here. His readers are ‘called,’ loved,’ and ‘kept.’ As we proceed through Jude’s letter, we shall see that he likes the number three. He uses threesomes on many occasions.... As Jude describes the recipients of his letter, he is really answering the crucial foundational question: ‘What is a Christian?’ ... A Christian is not simply someone who attends church. A Christian is certainly not just anyone who is born of Christian parents, or happens to have been born in a ‘Christian’ country. Neither is a Christian simply someone who seeks to be kind to others and tries to live by the ‘golden rule.’

a) *Called*

Benton: First, a Christian is someone who has been ‘called’ by God.... All true Christians have heard the voice of God speaking to them in the depth of their souls. They have heard the Holy Spirit calling them away from this world and its fading pleasures. They have felt him convicting them of their sin and self-centeredness and their hearts have ached. Then God the Holy Spirit has illuminated Christ in all His gracious love. They have felt the drawing power of the cross where Jesus died to take our sins away even while we were enemies of God. They have heard the voice of God in the gospel calling them to trust themselves wholly to Jesus and to live to serve Him, and they have responded to that call. That is what constitutes a Christian.

Gardner: ‘Called’ is a word often attached to God’s people. It expresses the close relationship we have with God and reminds us of God’s desire to save people from judgment. But it does much more than this. The background to this word is found in the Old Testament where we are reminded that in ‘calling’ His people to Himself, God took the initiative and brought Israel into being (cp. Is. 42:6).... For those who belong to the Lord, the world is full of encouragement, for it reminds them that God has taken the initiative because He loved them and it reminds them that He will keep them and see them through to glory – which is just what Jude goes on to say (cp. Rom. 8:30).

Moo: Jude identifies his readers as Christians. The key word in the description is ‘called’ (*kletois*). This word reflects the New Testament conviction that being a Christian is a product of God’s gracious reaching out to bring helpless sinners into a relationship with Himself. ‘Call’ does not mean, then, ‘invite’—as if God were asking people to a party and they can either accept

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or decline. It means ‘choose’ or ‘select,’ and God’s ‘choosing’—because it is He the sovereign Lord, who is doing it—is effective.

MacArthur: ‘Called’ translates the adjectival pronoun *klētos*, which is related to the familiar verb *kalēō*, ‘to call.’ ... The word conveys the idea of being personally chosen or selected. God has called believers to Himself; He has set them apart and chosen them as His children. Jude here is not speaking about God’s general invitation to sinners—a call which often goes unheeded and rejected. Rather, he is speaking of God’s special, internal call through which He awakens the human will and imparts spiritual life—enabling once-dead sinners to embrace the gospel by faith (cp. Jn. 5:21; Acts 16:14; Eph. 2:5)... In His sovereign wisdom, God chose believers based solely on His gracious purpose in Christ from before time began His call was not rooted in anything He saw in them—not even their foreseen faith... Rather, His call was motivated by His own glory and good pleasure, that His mercy might be eternally put on display (Rom. 9:23-24). Believers, then, are those who are divinely elected to salvation. They did not earn God’s choice, nor can they lose it or have it taken away (cp. Jn. 6:37-40; 10:27-30; Rom. 8:28-30, 38-39). Thus, they can rest in the security of God’s gracious call, even in the most dangerous conflict with false teaching.

Helm: God’s people are [called] because of God’s choice. God is the initiator, first pursuer, lover. His will beckons us, and we come; we come because He called. Charles Spurgeon... said: ‘I believe the doctrine of election, because I am quite sure that if God had not chosen me, I should never have chosen Him; and I am sure He chose me before I was born, or else He never would have chosen me afterwards. And He must have elected me for reasons unknown to me, for I never could find any reason in myself why He should have looked upon me with special love.’

b) Beloved

Benton: A Christian, secondly, is someone who is ‘loved by God the Father.’ ‘Doesn’t God love everyone?’ someone may ask. Yes, he does. But for those outside of Christ, His love is mixed with sadness and anger... But for the Christian, God has nothing but love. It is unmixed. The Christian is truly the child reconciled to God as his Father and held in His embrace. God’s love for the non-Christian is the broken love of a broken family. God’s love for the Christian is the vibrant love of a family in harmony... Not only is the love that God has for His people an unmixed love, it is also a sovereign love... Scripture tells us that when someone becomes a Christian it is because God chose that person, and loved him or her unconditionally before the beginning of time, and in His love infallibly draws the person to faith in Christ... It is God’s sovereign love alone which makes the difference, and rescues us from sin and immorality.

Gardner: ‘Loved by God the Father’ again reminds us of the call of God and the reason for His call. It is not that Christians specially deserved God’s love and favor. This is God’s unmerited favor to His people – His grace. For the people of Israel, God’s love was most clearly seen in the Exodus when He redeemed His people from slavery in Egypt (cp. Dt. 7:6-8)... In the New Testament, the people of God are identified with those who have faith in Christ and they too are taught that they are not called because they were special but because God loved them. That love is most clearly seen in the final and complete redemption achieved by Christ’s death on the cross.

Moo: Instead of ‘loved by God the Father,’ we could also translate ‘loved [or beloved] in God the Father.’ In this case, Jude is emphasizing not the source of the love we experience—God the

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Father loves us—but the context in which we experience love—love is the product of our being ‘in,’ being in fellowship with God the Father. On the balance, the NIV rendering seems preferable [‘by’], for the alternative does not identify who is doing the loving. As those who are called and therefore belong to the people of God, we enjoy the experience of God’s constant love for us.

MacArthur: God chose to save believers because He loved them. Based totally on His sovereign pleasure and for reasons beyond human comprehension (cp. Rom. 9:11-13; 10:20; 1 Cor. 1:26-29; James 2:5), the Father purposed to set His love on certain sinners and redeem them (Mt. 11:27; Rom. 8:28-30; Eph. 1:4). Even when they were rebels, He chose them to be His children and the beneficiaries of Christ’s death.... ‘Beloved’ translates a perfect passive participle derived from the familiar verb *agapaō*. The perfect tense indicates that God placed His love in the present and into the future.

c) Kept

Benton: Thirdly, the Christian is someone who is ‘kept by Jesus Christ.’ The idea of keeping is something of a theme in Jude’s letter. It comes in verse 1, 6 (twice), 13 (where it is translated ‘reserved’), 21, and 24. Once someone is truly reconciled to God, he will not let that person go. He will keep him or her. God’s agent for keeping His people is His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Keeping is particularly a function linked to the Lord Jesus. As the book of Hebrews reminds us, His humanity makes Him especially fitted to understand and sympathize with those who are facing trials and temptations because he has faced them Himself during His earthly life.... Christ will keep a firm hold on His true people. Putting things another way, the true Christian is not just someone who makes a decision for Christ, but someone who sticks with that decision for the rest of his or her life and goes on with Christ and keeps going to the end. The Christian *perseveres* in the faith, and Christ *keeps* us in the faith. These are two sides of the same coin.

Gardner: Finally, Jude refers to his readers as those who are ‘kept’ by Jesus Christ. This again is a word which reminds us of God’s covenant love, His faithful and true love for His people (cp. Is. 42:6).... The idea that God *keeps* His people for a purpose is regularly taught in the Old Testament. In specifically saying that these people are kept by Jesus Christ, we are reminded of Jesus’ words to His Father in the prayer before His death (cp. Jn. 17:12).... Jesus will keep His people right the way through life and even death until the time when He returns and they inherit full salvation in the presence of God Himself.... In verse 24 he refers to how God’s people will be ‘kept’ from falling so that eventually they will be presented before God in His glorious presence. Surely there are few more wonderful teachings for us as Christians than this, which we sometimes call the doctrine of *perseverance*.

Moo: ‘Being kept for Jesus Christ’ means that God throughout this life exercises His power on behalf of Christians to preserve them spiritually intact until the coming of Jesus Christ in glory. Believers have much to go through in this life: temptations, trials, and onslaughts from Satan and his minions. But God promises to watch over us at every moment, keeping us safe for Christ’s sake.... Note how Jude beautifully comes back to this same idea at the end of the letter: ‘But *keep* yourselves in God’s love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life’ (v. 21). God ‘keeps’ us, but we must also ‘keep’ ourselves.

Helm: Being ‘called’ or ‘kept’ for Jesus doesn’t mean we don’t keep ourselves. God is not a God of presumption. But the emphasis in verse 1 is this: those who are called by the Spirit are kept for Jesus Christ. And nothing can shake these noble fruits loose from the tree.

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MacArthur: ‘Kept for’ translates a perfect passive participle (*tetērēmenois*), from the verb *tēreō*, ‘to observe, pay attention to, keep under guard, maintain. Although the NAS translators rendered Jude’s wording ‘kept for,’ the dative case of the participle suggests that ‘kept by’ might be a preferable translation.... Jesus Christ has promised to keep believers secure for all eternity (Jn. 6:25-50; 10:27-30; Rom. 8:35-39), a guarantee that is made possible by His death on the cross.... Those who believe salvation can be lost should be consistent and be reluctant to engage deadly error at close quarters. Jude began his letter by removing that needless fear—believers are ‘kept’!

Moo: We naturally pay great attention to the grace of God in conversion, and we joyfully anticipate the day when God’s grace will be manifested again in the return of Christ. But it is easy for Christians to forget about God’s grace of preservation, as He is daily at work in and among us.... Christians have many reasons to be anxious. But one thing we do not need to worry about: God’s faithfulness in maintaining us in our faith.

Helm: Jude wanted his readers to sense something of the overwhelming power and glory of being ‘called’ *and* ‘beloved’ *and* ‘kept.’ ... It looks to me like he got his ideas on this from the prophet Isaiah.... He loved to use these three words together as a description of God’s people. We see this, for example, in Isaiah 42: ‘Behold my servant, who I uphold [*love*]’ (v. 1), and continuing in verse 6: ‘I have *called* you in righteousness; I will take you by the hand and *keep* you.’ Jude expresses himself like Isaiah. To be God’s people is to be the ‘called’ *and* ‘beloved’ *and* ‘kept.’

3. Their Greeting (2)

²*May mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you.*

Benton: Jude now gives a salutation to his readers. It is an embryonic prayer, a wish for the Lord to bless them. As a consequence of what God has done and is doing for us, the Christian experiences and grows in the experience of three things: mercy, peace, and love.

MacArthur: Jude takes the phrase ‘mercy and peace,’ a common Jewish greeting (cp. 1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2; 2 Jn. 3) and adds ‘love’ to remind his readers of Christ’s love for them (cp. Eph. 3:19; Rev. 1:5). This threefold expression occurs only here in the New Testament.

a) Mercy

Benton: A Christian is someone who knows the mercy of God. A Christian is a sinner. Even after coming to Christ we are still sinners. Every day we deserve God’s wrath. But every day God is pleased to be merciful to us through the Lord Jesus Christ. Every day He forgives us.

Gardner: In Jewish greetings the word translated as ‘mercy’ denoted God’s steadfast covenant love. It described God’s kindness and faithfulness to His people.

MacArthur: First, God’s blessing includes a generous supply of His ‘mercy’ (Mk. 5:19; Lk. 1:50; Rom. 9:15; Gal. 6:16; Eph. 2:4; Titus 3:5; 1 Pe. 2:10; cp. Is. 63:9; Jer. 31:20). Whenever believers commit sin, they will always find an ample supply of mercy at God’s throne of grace (Heb. 4:15).

Moo: ‘Mercy is not often found in New Testament prayer-wishes (see, however 1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2; 2 Jn. 3); ‘grace’ is usually found in its place. But the meaning is much the same: God’s unmerited favor bestowed on sinners for their salvation.

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b) Peace

Benton: A Christian is someone who knows the peace of God.... The peace treaty between God and the believing sinner has been signed in Christ's blood shed on Calvary. That state of peace is translated into our experience by God's Holy Spirit in our heart. Further, in outworking of our Christian lives we experience that peace through faith in Jesus Christ.

Gardner: 'Peace' was another 'covenant' word which described the blessed (by God) state in which people live if they have experienced such covenant love. The Hebrew words lying behind the greeting are *hesed* (the covenant love or mercy) and *shalom* (the covenant peace of God experienced by those who have been forgiven and inherit God's blessings). Verses like Isaiah 54:10 communicate well the sort of blessings Jude, in his greeting, was praying the church would see 'in abundance' in their experience of life.

MacArthur: To meet the needs of every circumstance, God also multiplies His 'peace' to believers—a peace that stems from knowing that their sins are forgiven.

Moo: By 'peace,' Jude may mean the inner contentment that comes from a restored relationship to God in Christ—the 'peace of God.' But it more likely means our 'peace with God,' that is, the new status of reconciliation that God provides in His Son for us.

c) Love

Benton: A Christian is someone who knows the love of God.... The word Jude uses for 'love' is the Greek term *agape*. It is a term which particularly applies to the love of God. It is a love which is unconditional and even embraces the unlovely and the undeserving. We experience this love of God through the truth of the gospel and the Holy Spirit's witness in our hearts.

Gardner: 'And love be yours in abundance' is a Christian addition to the Jewish greeting of 'mercy' and 'peace.' Yet it is a natural way of drawing together the blessings God gives to His people.... Without God's enfolding faithful love there would be no hope for these Christians, for it is by God's love that His people are protected from themselves falling into sin and immorality.

MacArthur: God further blesses believers with constant outpourings of His 'love.' ... Clearly God pours out His abundant blessings on those whom He calls, loves, and keeps. Being His child includes infinite privilege and spiritual blessing (Eph. 1:3). But with those blessings comes great responsibility, a sobering subject to which Jude now turns.

Moo: 'Love' means not our love for others, but God's love for us.

d) Multiplied

Moo: In verse 2 he prays that his readers may be filled with 'mercy,' 'peace,' and 'love.' 'Filled with' is a more literally rendering of the Greek than we have in the NIV, though 'be yours in abundance' certainly captures the idea.... Jude knows, of course, that believers enjoy these wonderful blessings in Christ. But his prayer is that they may truly appreciate them and benefit from them in their day-to-day lives.

MacArthur: 'Be multiplied' (a form of the verb *plēthunō*) means 'to be increased,' implicitly to the fullest measure. Jude's prayer is that his audience would continually enjoy the Lord's blessing, no matter how difficult the spiritual battle might become (cp. 1 Pe. 1:2; 2 Pe. 1:2).

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Helm: I especially enjoy the word ‘multiplied.’ May our time spent in Jude help us see these things in abundance. May we know God’s mercy more intimately, His peace more completely, and His love more firmly – all of this and more.

Helm: Jude begins with power in his pen, with strong words and deep phrases. ‘Servant,’ ‘called,’ ‘beloved,’ ‘kept,’ good things in abundance. This is all so nourishing and perhaps foreshadowing. I get the idea that Jude’s first readers needed structural support – some undergirding early on – a clear sense of identity and place. And these are the things soldiers need when compelled into the fray.

C. Additional Introduction

1. Overview of Jude

Helm: The theme of Jude’s letter comes out of verse 3, ‘contend for the faith.’ But this contending or the faith is not put forward in a vacuum. Verse 4 supports the theme by contributing the occasion for the letter with the little word ‘for.’ Thus, the call to contend is rooting in Jude’s conviction that *the faith is being challenged* by opponents he only will call ‘certain people’ (vv. 4, 8, 10, 12, 16, 19). The structure of the entire letter flows from these ideas. The conclusions Jude makes about the challenges facing Christianity in verse 4 will be defended by him in verses 5-16. Further, the appeal to contend for the faith will find its explanation in verses 17-23.... Here is the structure of the letter:

- Jude 3: contending for the faith – Jude 17-23: showing us how
- Jude 4: challenges to the faith – Jude 5-16: supporting his case

Helm: Seeing this built-in construction should prove helpful. The theme, then, is an urgent appeal to ‘contend.’ And it should come as no wonder to find that the Greek word translated ‘contend,’ when verbalized, sounds like our word *agonizing*. It carries the idea of athletes who, in an effort to win, find themselves intensely struggling, competing, even fighting with all their might. Interestingly, elsewhere the word is attached to things that are intrinsically worthy of full effort. As one lexicon puts it: ‘...effort expended...in a noble cause.’ This is what Jude means.

Helm: In verses 17-23, we will see that contending for the faith is linked to the *calling* that Christians are to keep. In particular, we must ‘remember’ the words of the apostles (vv. 17-19) and ‘keep ourselves in the love of God’ (vv. 20-21). Beyond this calling, we have *commitments* to make. Christians are to *build one another up in their most holy faith* (v. 20), ‘*pray in the Holy Spirit*’ (v. 20), and ‘*wait for the mercy of Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life*’ (v. 21). In addition to both this high calling and these elevated commitments, we are to contend by our *conduct*. Christians are to be known for having ‘*mercy on those who doubt*, (v. 22), *saving others from the fires of Hell* (v. 23), and *showing mercy, even upon the unrepentant* (v. 23).

Helm: In one sense, verses 5-16 can be thought of as two sermons, complete with biblical texts and preaching outlines to support his case. In verses 5-10 he selects three historical *events* (the apostasy of the wilderness rebels, the autonomy of some angelic creatures, and the immorality of some ancient cities) to help his readers understand that challenges to the faith have always been present and that God has always met them with divine judgment. In verses 11-16 he will follow those three events with three Old Testament *examples* of people who challenged the faith and brought judgment upon themselves (Cain, Balaam, and Korah). In both sections, verses 5-10 and verses 11-16 Jude will powerfully exegete God’s revealed Word and provide illustrations from

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well-known contemporary literature (vv. 9, 14). In doing so, Jude intends to shore up those in the early church who with martyrdom at hand are fearful and wondering if God is strong enough to protect them in the hour of their contending.

Helm: Jude's urgent appeal to 'contend for the faith' should quicken our mind for action as well.... Jude is finished with pleasantries; something *required* is at hand. Urgency and immediacy move him. In other words, Jude wants contenders, and he wants them now. And with this letter he means to raise them up. In this sense Jude's letter reads as though it were written for the church today.... In fact, if he were alive in our day, I doubt Jude would change a thing. He would tell us that we live in an hour requiring us to 'contend for the faith,' for the ancient challenges are still being brought against the faith.

Helm: Jude also finds time in verses 24-25 to state the theme he had desired to close with if the circumstances were different. At the outset of his letter he had told his readers that he 'was very eager to write to you about our common salvation' (v. 3). Well, it appears that Jude was the kind of preacher who couldn't resist accomplishing what was fully in his heart to do. For the last two verses of Jude provide us with the most elevated and concise summary of all that we have in *common* in Christ. They unfold, in benediction and praise, all that God has accomplished for us in Christ as well as all that God will receive from us in eternity.

2. Occasion for Writing

Benton: Jude's epistle...is a letter, like most New Testament letters, written to oppose certain false teachers (vv. 4, 8, 10-13, 16, 18-19).

MacArthur: Jude had originally planned to write a positive letter, celebrating the great truths of the 'common salvation' that he shared with his readers. But the alarming news that false teachers had invaded the congregations to which he wrote, threatening that salvation truth (v. 4), compelled him to change his plans. Thus, he wrote a strong denunciation of the false teachers and their godless lifestyle—warning his readers and calling them to 'contend earnestly for the faith' so as to protect the one common gospel. The magnificent doxology with which the letter concludes (vv. 24-25) reveals Jude's confidence that his readers would stand firm by God's grace.

MacArthur: Without question, the greatest threat to the church has always been false teaching. Its subtlety and severity make it a spiritual poison unlike any other. While external threats—such as religious persecution and the world's animosity—are certainly unpleasant, the wounds they inflict are only physical and the injuries they cause only temporary. The deadliest false teaching, on the other hand, comes not from deceptive, non-Christian religions outside the church, but from spiritual pretenders *inside* the church. And the resulting damage is far greater than that caused by any external assault; the casualties are spiritual and the consequences are eternal. It's no wonder then, that Jesus warned about the deadly dangers of apostasy (Mt. 7:15-20).

MacArthur: By the end of the first century, when the apostle John wrote the book of Revelation, only two of the seven churches he addressed (Smyrna and Philadelphia) remained completely faithful. The other five churches, to one degree or another, had fallen prey to infiltrating doctrinal error and its moral consequences. Thus, Christ commanded them to repent, stand firm, and combat the falsehood they encountered; they were to wage war against apostasy and overcome it. Although Jude's letter was written some twenty-five years earlier, he also

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recognized that the battle for the truth in the church had already begun, as Peter a few years earlier had prophesied in 2 Peter 1:1-3 and 3:1-3. That's why Jude devoted his entire letter to the presence of apostate false teachers. He wanted his readers to stand strong against the spiritual deceptions that threatened to wreak havoc in their fellowship. And he also wanted all who propagated such errors in the church to be exposed and expelled.

3. Opponents of Truth

MacArthur: The exact identity of the false teachers is unknown. That they were not second-century Gnostics is clear, since there is no evidence of the distinctive teachings of Gnosticism (such as a cosmological dualism with the transcendent good God opposed to the evil emanation who created the material world; the evil of the material world; salvation through a secret or hidden knowledge, etc.) in Jude's description of them. In fact, Jude did not focus on the nuances of their false doctrine. Instead he denounced their godless lifestyle—condemning them as 'ungodly' a total of six times (vv. 4, 15, 18)... Having exposed their corrupt lives, there was no need for Jude to refute their specific heretical teachings, since by revealing their character Jude stripped them of any authority in the congregation. No thinking Christian would follow people who are fundamentally selfish. Jude did not merely revile them. He unveiled who they truly were, removing any grounds for their influence in the church.

Benton: He sums up their error as he describes them as 'godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord' (v. 4). Where did the false teachers get their teaching? Jude describes them as 'these dreamers' (v. 8). It would appear that they claimed to have received special authoritative revelation from God in dream-like experiences and visions. This claimed revelation was either to be added to the apostolic faith of Scripture, or even to supersede it... The ethical content of the false teaching was such to legitimize immorality of the worst sort among Christians. This is implied by the kinds of examples which Jude uses to warn the churches in verses 5-7.

Benton: The false teachers referred to by Jude saw themselves as having received special revelation from God (v. 8), which was subsequent to, and went beyond, the apostolic faith (v. 4). The dreams and visions they claimed to have had involved contact with angels and other celestial beings, and as a result they were given understanding into supposed new truth concerning the spiritual realm and God's will for this world. These false teachers probably saw themselves as having been raised by the grace of God to a higher spiritual status, and as being on a par with angels, or even above them... They claimed to be able to move in a dimension as yet inaccessible to the ordinary believer. This idea may seem fantastic to us, but in the widely circulated *Book of Enoch*, from which Jude quotes, the patriarch Enoch is depicted as a godly man who has many visions of angels and is let into celestial secrets while journeying in the spiritual dimension. Such ideas, then, would not seem unusual to many first-century Jewish people who had been touched by the gospel... Similarly, *The Assumption of Moses* is another book of supposed prophetic history in which information is purportedly given in the ending concerning action between celestial beings.

Benton: Allying themselves with experiences similar to the adventures of Enoch, the false teachers may have attached the term 'masters' (*despotes*) to themselves (v. 4), or even seen themselves in some sense 'gods.'... We can imagine many embroidered stories littering their racy sermons to gullible congregations in which they boasted of treating angels as servants, and casting out demonic spirits with abusive language (v. 8). Such stories of dazzling spiritual

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proWess would have made heady illustrations of their doctrine and produced a huge impact on their listeners, just as such stories continue to do in many circles today. ‘How can we gainsay such men who have had such remarkable experiences?’ would be the thought in the minds of many believers.

Benton: If this is somewhere near the true background against which Jude is writing, it would provide a straightforward reason as to why he would choose to quote from *The Assumption of Moses* and the *Book of Enoch*. If the false teachers were claiming revelation on a par with, or superseding, Scripture and the revelation through the Lord Jesus, then, initially at least, Jude must find ways of arguing against them other than reference to Christ and His apostles. Thus, Jude chooses to base much of his case on inter-testamental literature. The point would be, not that these documents were necessarily authoritative, but that they reject sin and command godliness. The line of Jude’s argument would be simple: here are documents which parallel the supposed experiences of the false teachers and which they may well have used to some extent to substantiate their claims, but these very same documents contradict their lax morality. Jude would be answering the claims of the false teachers from their own preferred material. We can understand, then, why Jude would quote these books without in any way having to revise the traditional view about the canon of Scripture.

MacArthur: Still others, especially in the early church, questioned Jude’s use of apocryphal materials (*1 Enoch* and possibly the *Assumption of Moses*). But the mere fact that Jude cited those works does not imply that he endorsed everything in them. Paul quoted Greek poets (Acts 17:28; 1 Cor. 15:33; Titus 1:12) and alluded to extrabiblical Jewish tradition (1 Cor. 10:4; 2 Tim. 3:8). Yet he obviously did not endorse everything in those works; neither did he consider them inspired Scripture. Jude, like Paul, cited the familiar apocryphal works by way of illustration. There is no indication that he regarded them as divinely inspired.

4. Obvious Similarities

Gardner: The similarities between Jude and 2 Peter 2 are obvious even on a superficial reading. This relationship has been explained in a variety of ways. Generally, it falls into three categories: a) Peter borrowed from Jude; b) Jude borrowed from Peter; c) both used a similar or the same source material. Jude is only twenty-five verses long and fifteen of these appear in at least a very similar form in 2 Peter 2. It is impossible to be absolutely certain who actually wrote first.

MacArthur: Even a cursory reading of Jude and 2 Peter reveals the striking parallels between them. In fact, nineteen of Jude’s twenty-five verses find parallels in 2 Peter. Scholars are divided about which author used the other as a source. (There is a third possibility, that both Peter and Jude drew from a common source. However, there is no evidence that such a source existed). Many of the arguments for the priority of either epistle are subjective and tend to cancel each other out. There are two objective arguments, however, that favor the chronological priority of 2 Peter. First, Peter predicts that false teachers will come in the future (e.g., 2:1, 2; 3:3), while Jude describes them as already present (e.g., vv. 4, 10, 11, 12, 16). That strongly implies that 2 Peter was written before Jude.... If Peter was familiar with Jude’s epistle, which describes the false teachers as already present in the church, his use of the future tense would not make sense. Second, the wording of verses 17-18 is almost identical to 2 Peter 3:3. It appears that Jude is citing Peter’s prophecy (that false teachers would come) and noting its fulfillment in his day. There is no other similarly-worded prophecy to which Jude could be referring. Further,

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the word translated ‘mockers’ (*empaiktēs*) appears in the New Testament only in Jude 18 and 2 Peter 3:3.

Gardner: My own view is that probably Jude and 2 Peter were written around the same time, while I am unpersuaded by any of the arguments supporting either those who believe Jude was written first or those who believe 2 Peter was written first.... Similarities there are, and this may suggest either that they use a common source for some of their material and/or that some of the false teaching in both churches was similar. Nevertheless, the differences between the epistles are considerable as well. 2 Peter contains more in it that is *not* found in Jude than is found there. Jude tackles some different themes and so we must never be tempted to assume that if we have studied 2 Peter we can virtually ignore the book of Jude.

Benton: Some scholars have argued that Jude in fact acted as the secretary to Peter, writing down Peter’s thoughts to form his second letter. This would certainly account for Jude’s familiarity with the 2 Peter material. But why would Jude himself feel that he must put pen to paper in his own name?

Benton: Jude was part of the earthly family of the Lord Jesus Christ, a child of Mary and Joseph, a brother of James (v. 1) and a half-brother of the Lord Jesus.... According to Julius Africanus, who lived in Emmaus in the late second century, members of the family of Jesus were known as the *desposunoi*. This is related to the idea that the Lord Jesus was known as *ho despotes*, the Master, in early Palestinian Christian circles in which his family was known. If this was the case, it indicates that the family was popularly regarded as a special group. Certainly, it was a family, the father and mother of which had truly been visited by angels in connection with the nativity of Jesus. Yet Jude, in his letter opposing elitist false teachers, calls himself only a ‘servant’ of Jesus Christ. The point would be this: if Jude, who was popularly seen as belonging to the elite comprised by the earthly family of Jesus, will only call himself a ‘servant’ of Jesus Christ, what right do these (false) teachers have to see themselves as masters? This would have particular force coming from someone like Jude, rather than, say Peter, who was not a part of the so-called ‘holy family.’ If our scenario is somewhere near the truth, it may have been such a consideration that moved Jude himself to write.

5. Opinions on Date

Gardner: When did Jude, brother of Jesus, write this letter? We have very little information to go on, but can reasonably say that a brother of Jesus, even though he would have been younger, is unlikely to have written anything much after AD 85 simply because of age. The Palestinian Jewish flavor of the letter may suggest an early date possible.... It is at least possible, if not likely, that 2 Peter was written *after* Jude. If this is the case, and Peter wrote 2 Peter, then we have to date Jude sometime before the mid-sixties when Peter was martyred in Rome for his faith. Beyond this we can say little.

Moo: We can assume that the letter was written sometime between about 40 AD (to allow time for the false teaching to develop) and 80 AD (when even a younger brother of Jesus would have been at least 70 years old). But where to place it within this time period is not easy to decide. Many scholars date the letter on the basis of a specific identification of the false teachers, but...we cannot be sure about who those false teachers were. Others date Jude by reference to its relationship to 2 Peter. This is a more fruitful approach.... The similarity between the two does suggest that they were dealing with similar false teaching, and probably at about the same time.

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Second Peter...was written toward the end of Peter's life, in the middle 60s. We should probably date Jude at about the same time.

MacArthur: There is nothing in the epistle itself that indicates when it was written. Those who deny that Jude wrote it usually date it in the second century. In support of that late date, they argue that Jude 17 speaks of the apostolic age as long past. They also argue that the false teachers described in the epistle were second-century Gnostics. But Jude 17 merely suggests that most of the apostles (perhaps all except John) were dead; it says nothing about how long ago they had died. In fact, verse 18 implies that Jude's readers had heard some of the apostles preach, so they could not have been dead very long. Nor were the false teachers of Jude's day second-century Gnostics.... Others place Jude in the apostolic age (i.e., before the deaths of Peter and Paul), possibly as early as the mid-fifties of the first century. But since Jude was probably written after 2 Peter, it was not likely to have been written before Peter's death. Since Jude does not use the destruction of Jerusalem (AD 70) as an illustration of God's judgment of the ungodly, he probably wrote his epistle before that event. The most likely date for Jude, then, is the period between Peter's death and the destruction of Jerusalem (c. AD 68-70).

MacArthur: It is not known where Jude was when he penned this epistle. Since his brother James headed the Jerusalem church, it is possible that though Jude traveled in his ministry, Jerusalem was his home base. If that were the case, he may have written his epistle from there.

D. Application

1. Antidote

Benton: Jude is writing to Christian believers at a time when the gospel is under attack from false teachers who have infiltrated among them (vv. 3-4)... The scenario here could refer to churches generally where false teaching had gained influence. Or it may refer to just one local church where this had happened and which was particularly well known to Jude. Either way, Jude is writing to combat this influx of heresy which he sees overwhelming and endangering the people of God. The most important features of the heresy are that it constitutes an attack on the moral purity of the church and the doctrinal truth about Jesus Christ.... The issues of truth and moral integrity are fundamental to the health and vitality of the church. To drift in these areas is to put in jeopardy the church's very existence.... There are immense and subtle pressures on the church to compromise in these vital areas. The letter of Jude could not be more pertinent to us.

Benton: It is a short letter, only twenty-five verses. But it is extremely potent. Think of a tiny dose of penicillin which can heal a person of a deadly disease. Think of a small personal computer which can carry vast amounts of vital information. Think of the mighty Goliath, felled with one little stone. In the providence of God this diminutive letter can heal sick churches, inform and clarify the thinking of God's people at a vital time, and slay giant threats to the spiritual lives of Christians.

2. Against Heresy

Benton: It is worth noticing two things about heresy generally before we proceed. First, we can immediately detect that Jude's attitude is clearly out of step with that of the modern world and its dominant philosophy.... The only heresy for the contemporary world is to say that there is such a thing as heresy. 'All opinions are valid.' 'All faiths lead to God.' ... Such slogans as these rule contemporary society. But our author would disagree. For Jude there is truth and error. There

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are such things as false teachers.... The fundamental facts concerning God, sin, and Christ and His atonement are universal and absolute. This truth, revealed by God, Jude calls ‘the faith.’ We can step out of truth and into error. There are true Christians and there are heretics.

Benton: Secondly, ... there is more than one way of departing from the body of salvation truth that Jude calls ‘the faith.’ We can either subtract from it, or seek to add to it. We meet both these avenues of heresy in the New Testament. In 1 Corinthians we meet those who deny the resurrection. In 2 Peter we meet those who scoff at the truth of Christ’s second coming. These people are subtracting from the faith. They thereby deny the reliability of Christ and the apostolic witness to Him. By contrast, in Galatians we are confronted by those who say that we need Christ plus adherence to Jewish customs. In Colossians we meet those who would place Christ alongside other spiritual beings and powers. These people are adding to the faith. They thereby deny the all-sufficiency of Christ our Savior. Today, there are many false ideas. There are many suggestions as to how the church should ‘improve’ on the old biblical gospel in the modern age. Jude is the small but powerful antidote to such things. It is strong medicine. For this small letter is not simply the word of men, but the Word of God.

Gardner: This little book has much to say that is of real relevance and profit for the modern church. It speaks of how God keeps and protects and cares for His people even when they are facing heresy. It exhorts Christians to contend earnestly for their faith, especially in the face of false teaching by godless and immoral people. Jude asks his readers to learn from history. Though the examples he uses do not immediately ring bells with people these days, once understood, their application is immediately apparent. Jude also tells Christians about the precautions they should take to prevent themselves being seduced away from the truth. He even suggests ways in which the godless teachers might be saved from judgment. Then, underlying the whole letter is Jude’s great commitment to the sovereignty of God.

3. Anti-Elitism

Benton: There is a sense in which very group of false teachers sees itself as an elite.... Usually such teachers form their own groups outside the umbrella of the church. They become sects. By contrast, Jude’s false teachers were quite willing to join in the love feasts and communion services of the church (v. 12). Jude expressly describes them as having ‘secretly slipped in among you’ (v. 4). They were not seeking overtly to divide the church and take a group right out of it; rather it seems they were trying to subvert the whole church from the inside. In many ways this is far more dangerous than the strategy of sectarians.... Their line to ordinary believers presumably would have been in terms of saying, ‘Yes, we accept that you are Christian, *but you are not Christian enough*. Our teaching and the experiences we can lead you into, will alone make you fully Christian. You are not as free as you could be in Christ.’

Benton: It is not just through claimed charismatic experience that people can set themselves up as an elite. There are many other ways of doing the same thing. Intellectual attainment can also be used as the building material for a two-tier Christianity. Then again, it may be that being brought up in a certain doctrinal tradition will encourage some to see themselves as somehow superior to other Christians.

For next time: Read Jude 3-4.