**Jude**

**Helpful Background for the Book, Part 1**

1. In the early Church, the truth about Jesus Christ and what He accomplished was already under attack from false teachers. Men and women with impure motives were already attempting to undermine God’s Word and the Lordship of Jesus. They did so to gain power, a prideful position, or financial gain. Jude, like other NT authors responded by warning Christians to know and defend the truth.

2. The author of this short letter is Jude, son of Joseph and Mary, brother of James, and half-brother of Jesus. ) Mt. 13:55, Mk. 6:3) Most Biblical scholars affirm that the author of this book most likely is the full brother of James, who also wrote a letter that is in the NT. By the time this letter was written, James had become the head of the Church in Jerusalem.

3. Jude refers to himself being fully surrendered to Jesus Christ. He describes himself as a servant, or to be more accurate, a slave of Jesus Christ. He describes himself as a brother to James. Even though he could claim the relationship with Jesus to establish his credibility, he does not. Instead, he claims a status that every follower of Jesus should claim; fully obedient, slave to our Lord Jesus.

4. No one in Jesus’ family of origin believed He was Messiah during His ministry. All of His siblings, including James and Jude, thought He was crazy and tried to take Him into protective custody. (Mk. 3:21, Jn. 7:1-5) After the resurrection though, Jesus appeared to James, (1 Cor. 15:7) and this encounter apparently convinced James that Jesus was who He said He was… Son of God. Perhaps Jude was with James or was led to faith by James, but however it happened, he came to faith and accepted God’s plan of salvation through Jesus.

5. We know little about Jude. He was present in the upper room just prior to the coming of the Holy Spirit. (Acts. 1:14) He traveled with his wife as they served as missionaries. (1 Cor. 9:5) We do not have any other references to Jude in the NT.

6. The letter from Jude is addressed to all believers, not to a specific group of believers or Church. The OT references would be more familiar to Jewish Christians, but the letter is addressed to all of those who are “called by the Father.” The letter addresses problems that would have been prevalent throughout the early Church and still cause difficulties in the Church today.

7. The letter is for EVERY follower of Jesus Christ. It is addressed to those who are called, which applies to every person who has trusted in Jesus, as we respond to God’s call. It is addressed to those who God has and continues to love. Finally, the letter is intended for those who are being kept safe by God the Father in Jesus the Son. Scripture promises that once we are secure in the grip of God’s grace, nothing can separate us from the love of God, which is expressed to us through Christ. (Rom. 8:38-39)

8. Jude had intended to write an encouraging letter about “the salvation that we all share.” (1:3) But, a more urgent topic presented itself and it became apparent that Jude needed to address it. He urges believers to defend the faith.

9. The Greek word [EPAGONIZESTHAI] (v. 3) occurs only here in the entire NT. It is translated “defend” (NLT) or “contend,” (NIV) and means “an intense struggle in an athletic contest/event.” Jude calls the believers to action to contend for/defend the faith. This action would not be easy. It called for hard work, diligent study, and a willingness to stand against the currents of culture or popular thought. Speaking up for the truth and keeping it free from compromise or perversion. The Christian faith must be actively defended against the attack of false teaching.

10. “The faith” refers to the entire body of Christian beliefs, taught by Jesus and the apostles, and inspired by the Holy Spirit, recorded in the scriptures. (Acts 2:42) This unchanging “once for all” truth was entrusted by God to the Church, and needed to be actively guarded and preserved.

11. Jude reveals the reason for the urgency with which he writes in verse 4. Some “ungodly people have wormed their way in” to the fellowship of faith. Most likely, Jude had heard reports from various geographic areas of struggles over doctrinal issues and fights between people within churches. These attacks on the truth were not direct, but rather subtle, gradual, and seemingly from within the Church. Jude chooses a word, translated “wormed,” which means an intentional effort to stay hidden while doing something illegal or wrong. It can also be translated smuggled or intruded.

12. This problem could have started with traveling teachers, who if warmly welcomed, may have settled in and shared teaching that was slightly off. (Gal 2:4) Some false teachers subtly influenced people to accept teaching that sounded right, but proved to be wrong. These people might have also been locals, who were influenced by wrong teaching, and brought it into the fellowship of faith to intentionally distract the Church.

13. Jude provided an example of a slightly wrong teaching that gets more and more wrong as it is unpacked. (v. 4) When teaching about God’s marvelous grace, it’s easy to share how God can and does forgive ALL of our sins; past, present and future. This is a correct and Biblical teaching. But, if a teacher then says that the grace of God will always forgive our sins, so it doesn’t matter what we do/say/think, so we need not concern ourselves so much about living a Godly life…. Now we have stepped off of the trail of right-teaching and our heading for a slippery slope. The teaching on grace can be perverted into giving believers a license to sin.

14. The Greek verb [PROGRAPHO] means “to write down before hand or in advance.” )v. 4, “recorded long ago,” NLT, “was written about long ago,” NIV) This statement refers to previously “written” conditions of condemnation, where God had already set up a punishment for anyone who was a false teacher or false prophet. This is a general condemnation, declared in advance for anyone who led faithful people astray, not a specific condemnation of each false teacher in advance.

15. Jude gave two reasons why the false teachers were destined for condemnation.

a. They perverted the grace of God by teaching and living like it was a license to sin, demonstrating distain for the unchanging moral law of God. Despite God’s calling for His people to be Holy, and the empowering work of the Spirit to help us choose rightly, they taught that immorality of all varieties was acceptable. The arrogant false teachers taught that a Christian’s privileged position in God’s grace allowed them to be above God’s moral law, and that our thoughts, words, and actions could be as sinful as we wanted, because we were secure.

b. They denied the ONLY Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. This refers to the teaching that the accomplished work of Jesus on the cross bought us freedom and forgiveness, and everything else Jesus taught did not apply as “commands,” but were merely suggestions. This teaching focused on Jesus as Savior, and denied Jesus as Lord. It was a teaching of “selective obedience,” where each individual decided for themselves which of the suggestions of Jesus they would follow. Jesus was considered to be a great teacher, a wise leader, and of course, Messiah and Son of God, but the Lordship of Christ was only to be applicable in His second coming to our world.