

# JUDE

## Introduction

1. The external attestation to this small letter is early and good.
2. It finds a place in the second-century Muratorian Canon; Tertullian recognized it as an authoritative Christian document; so did Clement of Alexandria, who wrote a commentary on it.
3. Origen hints that there were doubts in his day, but he clearly did not share them, for he quotes Jude as authoritative with enthusiasm: “And Jude wrote an Epistle, tiny in the extreme, but yet full of powerful words and heavenly grace” (*Commen. in Matth.* 10:17)
4. In addition, Athenagoras, Polycarp, and Barnabas seem to have cited the Epistle early in the second century, so it could hardly have been composed later than the end of the first.
5. Eusebius classes it among the disputed books, and it was not admitted into the early Syrian Canon, the *Peshitta*.
6. The reason is not hard to discover.
7. Jude quoted apocryphal writings, and although in some circles in the West this tended to add stature to the apocryphal works in question, in the East this link with apocryphal material was sufficient to cause Jude’s rejection.
8. Jerome says as much.
9. He explains the cause of the doubts about Jude as “because he appealed to the apocryphal book of Enoch as an authority, it is rejected by some” (*De vir. Ill.* iv.)
10. As late as the end of the fourth century Didymus of Alexandria had to defend Jude against those who attacked it because of its use of apocryphal material.
11. It is clear that this was the only reason for the hesitation felt in some quarters about Jude.
12. By AD 200 it was accepted in the main areas of the ancient church, in Alexandria (Clement and Origen), in Rome (Muratorian Canon), and in Africa (Tertullian).
13. Only in Syria were there objections, and even there these could hardly have been in unison, because Jude was accepted into the Philoxenian and Harklean recensions of the N.T.
14. Clement of Alexandria, in the *Adumbrations*, says that this letter was written by Jude, the brother of James, the Lord’s brother.
15. So does Epiphanius, but he calls him an apostle as well, as do many of the Fathers (Origen, Athanasius, Jerome, Augustine).
16. That the Lord’s brethren were loosely known to others as apostles appears from Gal.1:19.
17. But Jude was no apostle.
18. He styles himself “a bond-slave of Jesus Christ and brother of James”.
19. There can be no doubt who is meant.

20. Kummel summarizes the matter well when he writes, “As ‘brother of James’ he is characterized clearly enough. There was only one eminent, well-known James, the brother of the Lord (Jam.1:1; Gal.1:19; 2:9; 1Cor.15:7). Then Jude is one of the brothers of Jesus, the third named in Mark 6:3, the fourth in Matthew 13:55. Otherwise we know nothing of this Jude” (*Introduction to the NT*, p. 300).
21. The author could hardly be Judas, the brother of James (Lk.6:16), one of the twelve, because the author of this letter expressly dissociates himself from the apostles (v.17).
22. But why, if Jude is the brother of the Lord, does he not say so?
23. The answer, as old as Clement of Alexandria, is his humility.
24. The church called James and Jude brothers of the Lord (1Cor.9:5), but they preferred to think of themselves as His servants, remembering, no doubt, that in the time of their actual association with Him as brothers, they did not believe in Him (Jn.7:5).
25. But both letters (James and Jude) combine unquestioned authority with personal humility, which is precisely what one would expect from a converted member of the family circle of Jesus.
26. The Epistle of Jude has received a very poor press.
27. Not only has it lived in the shadow of Second Peter, but it seems to be little but a string of denunciations, and many regard it as an “early Catholic” reaction to incipient Gnosticism.
28. Both of these assumptions are highly questionable.
29. Firstly, the denunciations.
30. True, they predominate from vv.5-19.
31. But the most important and distinctive parts of Jude come in vv.1-4 and vv.20-25.
32. It is here, not in the denunciations, that the burden of his message is concentrated.
33. In any case, the polemical section is far from mere denunciation.
34. One author concludes that it is a carefully composed “peshet” (or “commentary”) exegesis, in which Jude argues that the libertinism of his opponents marks them out as the sinners of the last days who were prophesied by the O.T., by some inter-testamental works, and by the words of the apostles.
35. Moreover, Jude is not addressing his opponents in this letter.
36. It is not a case of “argument weak: shout louder”.
37. He is writing to warn his orthodox, if wobbly, Christian readers of the dangers of succumbing to the blandishments of the false teachers, and when he comes to his positive teaching at the end of the letter, he gives wise advice on how to help those who are carried away into error, and shows a deep pastoral care (vv.22,23).
38. Secondly, the “early Catholicism”.
39. The somewhat pejorative epithet arose in Germany to denote the reaction of the second century church to the twin threats of Gnosticism and Montanism.
40. It denoted a hardening of the arteries, a fossilization of the faith into set forms, an emphasis on church leaders, a fading of the parousia hope, and a distancing from the apostolic age.
41. Many commentators have seen Jude as a representative of “early Catholic” literature, and have dated it, accordingly, in the first part of the second century.
42. “The faith” has become straitjacketed (v.3), the apostles belong to a bygone era (v.17), and the opponents, since patristic days, have been seen as Gnostics.
43. Nevertheless, such a conclusion is too bland.
44. It assumes what it seeks to prove.

45. For there is nothing in the letter itself to point to any of the distinguishing marks of Gnosticism proper.
46. Such identification is read into the letter rather than out of it.
47. You did not need to be a Gnostic to have visions, be fascinated by the apocrypha, live a sensuous life, and defile the love feasts!
48. Even if it were possible to demonstrate that marks of what later became Gnosticism are prevalent in Jude's false teachers, that would be an unsafe criterion for dating.
49. Many of the seeds of later Gnosticism were clearly there in the first century, as the Letters of John and, indeed, the Corinthian Epistles make plain.
50. Furthermore, the author does not refer to the apostles as belonging to a bygone era; he simply states that he himself did not belong to their number, and he urges his readers to pay attention to their predictions that false teachers would arise, for this has, in fact, taken place (hence, his letter).
51. The reference to "the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (v.3) does not require a late date.
52. "The faith" is used in this objective way as early as Gal.1:23 and Phil.1:27.
53. Paul makes it plain that the idea of Christian orthodoxy was well established by the fifties of the first century (e.g., Rom.6:17; Gal.1:8ff; 1Thess.2:13; 2Thess.2:15; 3:6,14).
54. No, this letter comes from the heart of Jewish Christianity.
55. It is nourished by the beliefs and assumptions of apocalyptic Judaism.
56. All the evidence points in this way – the rugged Jewishness of the Epistle, the use of those apocalyptic books *I Enoch* and the *Testament of Moses*, the midrash pesher exegesis (i.e., homiletic exposition with, particularly in the Qumran Community, an application of the Biblical prophecies to the "end time") of vv.5-19.
57. Jude is no defensive Catholic tract from the second century, but a passionate defense of Jewish Christian faith and life to believers living in the midst of a pluralistic and permissive pagan society.
58. And therein lies one of its great values for Christians in our own liberal, materialistically oriented times.
59. Why did Jude write this letter?
60. And when did he do so?
61. He wrote in a hurry because of the outbreak of dangerous antinomianism in churches with which he was concerned.
62. It was brought by travelling teachers (v.4) who "turn the grace of our God into licentiousness".
63. It has been customary to regard them as Gnostics.
64. It has been the traditional way to interpret Jude since at least the days of Clement of Alexandria, who thought Jude wrote prophetically against the Carpocratians.
65. Some have seen in the hints afforded by Jude's denunciations the following characteristics in his opponents: as docetic Christology (v.4), the Gnostic division of mankind into pneumatics and psychics (v.19), and angelology and dreams (vv. 6-9).
66. On the one hand, we have seen that Jude cannot be placed in the second century, but on the other hand, these very covert allusions would be a singularly ineffective way of countering a major Gnostic heresy, based on a cosmological dualism of which there is no trace here.
67. We can be confident that Jude's opponents were not Gnostics.

68. The heretics were a self-indulgent group of people, antagonistic to the element of law in the Christian life, keen on freedom, rather insubordinate to human and celestial authorities alike, were arrogant and schismatic, and claimed prophetic revelations as authority for their teaching.
69. They did not cut themselves off from the orthodox, but sought to infiltrate them and draw them away; thus they were “sunken reefs in your love feasts”.
70. Such were their main characteristics: they found their way (along with much else) into second century Gnosticism.
71. But there is insufficient criteria supplied us in the letter to arrive at a precise identification of who they were.
72. Bauckham sees them as charismatics who had “gone over the top”, Ellis has Judaizers, Reicke as political agitators, while others find their affinities with Edessa or Qumran.
73. We do not know precisely who they were.
74. What we do know is that they were a dangerous libertine element which had come into the churches with which Jude was concerned, and he was clear that if they remained unchecked they could do much damage.
75. Their advocacy of liberty was so specious, their way of life so tempting, their pretensions to spirituality so impressive, their initiative and independence so attractive.
76. They were a great danger, and that is why Jude wrote.
77. And when?
78. There is really very little to go on, which accounts for the wide variety of scholarly guesses.
79. His was not a general letter, but written to people he knew in a particular situation (vv.3-5, 17,18, 20).
80. He is clearly Jewish himself, but that does not mean that his readers are.
81. He assumes their knowledge of Jewish inter-testamental and apocryphal literature.
82. He talks of “our common salvation”, which would fit either Jewish or Gentiles readers.
83. Certain scholars see Antioch as a probable destination.
84. It is within the Palestine area, to which James, and therefore possibly Jude, confined himself.
85. Antioch comprised Jewish and Gentile Christians; moreover, various of the apostles ministered there, which would make good sense of v.17.
86. Certainty is, of course, impossible; there is inadequate evidence on which to base a considered judgment.
87. There can be no doubt that Jude knew and used at least two apocryphal writings, the *Assumption of Moses* and the *Book of Enoch*, and probably others as well, such as the *Testament of Naphtali* in v.6 and the *Testament of Asher* in v.8.
88. Jude quotes *Enoch* freely.
89. It is a long apocryphal book probably composed at different periods from the first century BC to the first century AD.
90. Jude cites *Enoch* 1. 9 in v.15, almost verbatim.
91. In v.14 he calls Enoch “the seventh from Adam”, a description from *Enoch* lx. 8, and there is a good deal in *Enoch* which is drawn on in Jude’s description of the fallen angels in vv.6 and 13.
92. Jude’s indebtedness to the *Assumption of Moses* (v.9) is no less certain.
93. Indeed it is openly asserted by Origen, Clement, and Didymus, who knew the book, which now exists only in fragments; it was probably written at the very beginning of the first century AD.

94. Both the *Assumption* and *Enoch* were highly esteemed in the early church.
95. Jude quotes them as relevant to the situation for which he writes, and well-known to him and to his readers.
96. New Testament writers occasionally allude to this vast mass of extra-canonical material that was circulating in the first century.
97. Paul alludes to the rabbinical midrash on the Rock in 1Cor.10:4; the author of Hebrews frequently echoes the works of Philo; in 2Tim.3:8 we are told that Jannes and Jambres were the magicians who defied Moses before Pharaoh (a piece of Jewish *haggada* based on Ex.7:11 and found in various extra-canonical writings).
98. Similarly, the instrumentality of angels in giving the law (Gal.3:19; Heb.2:2), and the statements in Acts.7:22, Jam.5:16, and Heb.11:37 all allude to apocryphal material.
99. An inspired writer might well use uninspired quotes or allusion where the ideas were not at variance to divine revelation.
100. We have no right to assume that inspiration of some incidents or ideas within these extra-canonical writings extends to other things within a particular work.
101. Jude and Second Peter: where lies the priority?
102. Verses 4-16 of Jude have extensive parallels, both in language and subject matter, with chapter 2 of Second Peter.
103. The affinities are so close, as anyone can see who reads the two passages, even in an English translation.
104. Did Second Peter use Jude, or vice versa?
105. The following are reasons why I prefer the priority of 2 Peter:
  - a. The probability that Jude.17,18 refer to the prophecy of 2Pet.3:2-3.
  - b. The fact he wrote hurriedly makes it likely that he would have made use of a suitable source that was at hand (*i.e.*, Second Peter).
  - c. The unity of style in Second Peter makes it unlikely that Peter made wholesale borrowing from another author.
  - d. That the leading apostle would borrow from an obscure man like Jude seems to be against the priority of Jude.

#### Author and Recipients (v.1)

**VERSE 1 Jude, a bond-servant of Jesus Christ** (Ἰούδας Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ δοῦλος [*pr.n.* Judas/Jude, all one and the same; from Judah, + *gen.m.s.*, Christos Iesus, + *n.m.s.*, doulos, slave]), **and brother of James** (ἀδελφὸς δὲ Ἰακώβου [*conj., de, and,* + *n.m.s.*, adelphos, brother, + *gen.m.s.pr.n.*, James]), **to those who are the called** (τοῖς κλητοῖς [*def.art.w/adj.dat.m.p.*, kletos, called, invited]), **beloved in God the Father** (ἠγαπημένοις ἐν θεῷ πατρὶ [*pf.pass.pt.dat.m.p.*, agapao, to love, + *prep.w/loc.m.s.*, theos, God, + *loc.m.s.*, pater, father]), **and kept for [by] Jesus Christ** (καὶ τετηρημένοις Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ [*conj. + pf.pass.pt.instr.m.p.*, τηρέω, tereo, keep, preserve, + *dat.m.s.*, Christos Iesus]):

ANALYSIS: VERSE 1

1. Jude (or Judas, derived from Judah) makes two significant claims about himself.
2. The first has to do with his status within the household of God.
3. All believers are designated bond-slaves; only their rank and duties differ.
4. Even apostles (the highest rank) like Paul (Rom.1:1; Phil.1:1) and Peter (2Pet.1:1) recognized it, and both Jude and James (1:1), who were half-brothers of Jesus, make a point of calling themselves His bond-slaves.
5. What a change from the days before His resurrection, when His brothers did not believe in Him, but thought Him mentally unbalanced (Jn.7:5; Mk.3:21,31).
6. Jude recognized that he had no special advantages because he was connected to Jesus through blood.
7. Jesus recognized the superiority of the spiritual kinship over blood relations (Mt.12:47-50).
8. Flesh and blood does not inherit the kingdom of God (Jn.1:13).
9. All of Jesus' immediate family members were required to make the adjustments to God like everyone else in the human race.
10. Mary recognized that her unborn baby was her Savior (Lk.1:47).
1. The designation "bond-slave" is used against a culture that practiced slavery.
2. Whether we are obedient slaves or disobedient slaves, we are nevertheless all slaves.
3. Our future promotion and rewards depend upon our willingness to acclimate to our calling and niche in Ph2.
4. Each believer is a slave of Jesus Christ and each believer will be evaluated on his/her willingness to acclimate to the niche and responsibilities that befall him/her.
5. As slaves/servants, we are all under God's authority (Mt.8:5-10).
6. We should expect a certain amount of suffering for the faith, as we are not above Christ (Mt.10:24-39).
7. Greatness is based on willingness to serve (Mt.20:20-28).
8. As servants, we should not expect to be praised for doing our assignments (Lk.17:7-10).
9. We will be rewarded according to our faith (Lk.19:13-27).
10. Pleasing people renders us unfit to be servants of Christ (Gal.1:10).
11. Secondly, Jude calls himself the "brother of James".
12. The unadorned name, James, meant one person, and only one, in the apostolic church – James, the leader of the church in Jerusalem.
13. Though others called Jude "brother of the Lord" (1Cor.9:5), he preferred to style himself "brother of James" and "bond-slave of Jesus Christ".
14. It is a further mark of his modesty that he was prepared to play second fiddle to James, his more celebrated brother.
15. There is the parallel of Andrew, content to be known as Simon Peter's brother (Mt.4:18; 10:2; Lk.6:14; Jn.1:40; 6:8).
16. Men like Jude and Andrew might well have been jealous and resentful of the acclaim given their far more famous brothers, but both gladly accepted their place in the constellation of honored men of their era.
17. What is important is Ph3 notoriety.
18. Jude does not tell us where his readers lived, but he does give three remarkable descriptions of what it means to be a Christian.
19. This is the first of several such triads in this short letter.

20. It is possible that all three adjectives derive from the Servant Songs of Isaiah where Israel is described as called, loved, and kept by God.
21. In line with early Christian practice, Jude takes over these attributes of the historic Israel and applies them to the followers of Jesus.
22. First, they are “beloved in (ἐν) God the Father”.
23. This is the only place in the N.T. where believers are said to be “loved in God the Father”.
24. Paul often speaks of the believer as being “in Christ” (Rom.15:17; 2Cor.2:17, et. al.), or “in the Lord” (Rom.16:8; 1Cor.4:17, et. al.).
25. No doubt Jude means to combine the two ideas that his readers are loved by God, and also are incorporated in the Beloved One, and so in God (cp. Jn.14:10).
26. Secondly, they are “kept for (or better, ‘by’) Jesus Christ”.
27. This is the only occurrence of the perfect participle of the verb “keep” (*tereo*).
28. The verb is used in connection with the doctrine of eternal security in the high priestly prayer of Christ in John 17:12, where the Lord is the subject of the action (cp. vv.6,11,15).
29. In Jn.17:11 Jesus petitions the Father to “keep them in Your name”, which also relates to this very important doctrine.
30. Jesus taught this doctrine in Jn.10:28,29.
31. Jude assures the readers that their position “in the Father” is secure and that it does not depend upon them but upon the faithfulness and power of God.
32. Third, not first (as in the translation), is the designation “called”, or “invited”.
33. It is one of the N.T. titles of distinction for believers (adj.dat. of advantage m.p., *kletos*, called, invited; Rom.1:7; 8:28; 1Cor.1:2,24; Jude.1:1; Rev.17:14).
34. In Rom.8:28 it refers to our initial call to saving faith.
35. The call to eternal salvation is based on grace and not works (2Tim.1:9).
36. The WOG enjoins believers to remain in the temporal niche in which grace found them (1Cor.7:20ff).
37. Our calling is to a specific future look called hope (Eph.1:18; 4:4; Phil.3:14; cp. Heb.3:1).
38. We are commanded to “walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which we have been called” (Eph.4:1; 2Thess.1:11).
39. We have been called to a specific function within the body of Christ (Rom.1:1; 1Cor.1:1), as our individual spiritual gifts are bestowed upon us at salvation.
40. The “called” are comparatively few from the elite of society (1Cor.1:26).
41. We should make an effort to understand the particulars related to the why, how, and when of our calling (2Pet.1:10).
42. Actually, many more are called than are in fact chosen (Mt.22:14).
43. All who have received Christ are designated “the called” (Rom.1:5,6).
44. There is nothing about our destiny that is irrelevant to the call of God.
45. The call of God forms a fitting climax to this triad of descriptions of the privileged position of the believer in Jesus Christ.
46. God loves him positionally; Christ keeps him; God calls him.
47. So God has called us to His eternal kingdom and, based on our faith in Christ (the only acceptable response to the Ph1 aspect), we are from that moment forward forever guaranteed a seat at the King’s supper; the only question that remains is how illustrious a guest we will be!

## The Threefold Prayer-Wish (v.2)

**VERSE 2 May mercy and peace and love be multiplied to you** (ἔλεος ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη καὶ ἀγάπη πληθυνθείη [*n.nt.s., eleos, mercy, + pro.dat.p., su, you, + conj. + n.f.s., eirene, peace, + conj. + n.f.s., agape, love, + aor.pass.opt.3.s, πληθύνω, plethuno, be multiplied, grow, increase; same form as 1Pet.1:2; 2Pet.1:2*]).

**ANALYSIS: VERSE 2**

1. Jude has another triad of qualities that he desires for his readers.
2. The verb “may be multiplied” is an aorist passive optative.
3. The optative expresses a wish on the part of the author.
4. This form of the verb also occurs in 1Pet.1:2 and 2Pet.1:2.
5. He wants the blessings associated with these things to continue to escalate in their Christian lives.
6. If these believers sincerely continue with doctrine, then they can expect to see “mercy, peace, and love” increase in their Christian experience cp. 2Pet.1:2, Gal.5:22.
7. These factors will increase where the truth is continually being taught and applied.
8. How do we know that the intake and application of BD is the key to the realization of this wish?
9. For the answer, see 2Pet.1:2: “Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge (epignosis) of God and of Jesus our Lord (source)”.
10. Why “mercy”?
11. It is rare in a greeting (cf. 1Tim.1:2; 2Tim.1:2; 2Jn.3), but singularly important in these four places where it occurs against a background of false teaching.
12. It is a reminder that not only at his regeneration (cf. 1Pet.1:3; 1Tim.1:16; Ti.3:5), not only at the Bema Seat (2Tim.1:18; Jude.21), but every day of his life the positive believer stands in need of the mercy of God.
11. Nothing but unmerited mercy can meet the needs of habitual sinners.
12. We stand in need of mercy every time we sin and apply rebound.
13. We should extend the same mercy towards others that God extends toward us (Mt.18:23-35).
14. God’s mercy is extended to generation after generation to those who fear Him (Lk.1:50).
15. God’s mercy is behind Israel’s forgiveness and restoration (Lk.1:54).
16. Whenever we are singularly blessed, even if it is based on our faithfulness, it is an act of mercy (Lk.1:58; cp. Phil.2:27).
17. Mercy is upon those who walk according to BD (Gal.6:16).
18. Church Age believers are under special mercy based upon their dispensational privilege (Eph.2:4; 1Pet.2:10).
19. Deliverance is an act of mercy (Heb.4:16).
20. Only mercy can triumph over judgment (Jam.2:13).
21. God is a God of mercies (Rom.12:1; 2Cor.1:3; Lam.3:22,32).
22. All believers enjoy Ph1 peace, or reconciliation (Rom.5:1 cp. 8:1), and through knowledge of our salvation we have inner peace with respect to our final destiny.
23. BD teaches us how to enjoy inner peace (cf. Jn.14:27; 16:33; Phil.4:7).



24. BD calls us to external peace with our fellow man (Rom.12:18; 14:19; Prov.16:7).
25. Then there is Ph2 reconciliation, as per 2Cor.5:20.
26. In that context, both Ph1 (vv.18,19) and Ph2 (v.20) reconciliation are featured.
27. Phase 2 reconciliation is also in view in 2Pet.3:14 where, addressing believers, Peter admonishes them: “be diligent to be found by Him in peace...”.
28. The Corinthians corporately had become estranged from Paul’s ministry and were thereby estranged from God, so Paul wrote First Corinthians as a corrective.
29. They repented and repudiated the false teachers who had seduced them.
30. Second Corinthians was written in response to the news of their turn around, as reported by Titus (2Cor.7:6, 13,14).
31. Phase 1 reconciliation predominates in Scripture and is featured in the following N.T. passages (Rom.5:10; 11:15; 2Cor.5:18,19; Eph.2:16; Col.1:20,22).
32. “Peace”, as used in this salutation, includes Ph2 reconciliation, as well as the inner and external aspects.
33. All are multiplied in the lives of those who are pursuing epignosis.
34. Last, but not least, is “love”, which concludes the triad.
35. The noun ἀγάπη occurs 119X in the Greek N.T., while the verb ἀγαπάω occurs 167X.
36. One of God’s attributes is Love (1Jn.4:8,16).
37. He expects us to exhibit the same love towards man and God.
38. Jesus taught love of the brotherhood under the designation of “a new commandment” in Jn.13:34: “A new (kainos) commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another” (cp. 1Jn.2:7,8; 2Jn.1:5).
39. As we apply in fellowship (FHS) toward one another, we keep this commandment.
40. We need to be constantly learning *epignosis* in order to fulfill all the love directives.
41. Our love for God is measured by our willingness to keep His commandments (Jn.14:15: “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments”).
42. Under the Law, there is the “great commandment” to love God with all one’s heart, soul, and strength (Deut.6:5; cp. Mt.22:36-38).
43. The second is to love your fellow man as yourself (Lev.19:18; cp. Mt.22:39).
44. This is popularly called “the golden rule”.
45. These two commandments summarize the whole Law (some 613 commandments; Mt.22:40).
46. In order to flourish in these commandments, one had to become familiar with the O.T. canon.
47. God’s love increases in our experience to the extent that we know and do His will.
48. God’s love for us is made evident via the IHS who teaches us about His grace (Rom.5:5).

## The Letter That Had to Wait (v.3)

**VERSE 3 Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you** (Ἀγαπητοὶ ποιούμενος πᾶσαν σπουδὴν ράφειν ὑμῖν [*adj.voc.m.p., agapetos, beloved, dear friends, + pres.mid.pt.n.m.s., poieo, do, make, + adj.acc.f.s., pas, all, every, + acc.f.s., spoude, speed; diligence; “effort”, + pres.act.infin., grapho, write, + pro.dat.p., su, you*]) **about our common salvation** (περὶ τῆς κοινῆς ἡμῶν σωτηρίας [*prep.w/def.art.w/adj.gen.f.s., κοινός, koinos, common, + gen.f.s., soteria, salvation, + pro.gen.p., ego, “our”*]), **I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith** (ἀνάγκην ἔσχον γράψαι ὑμῖν παρακαλῶν ἐπαγωνίζεσθαι τῇ πίστει [*acc.f.s., ἀνάγκη, anagke, necessity, compulsion, + aor.act.ind.1.s., echo, have; “felt”, + aor.act.infin., grapho, write, + pro.dat.p., su, + pres.act.pt.n.m.s., parakaleo, exhort, summon, implore; “earnestly”, + pres.midd.infin., ἐπαγωνίζομαι, epagonizomai, make a strenuous effort, struggle for; “contend”; IX, + def.art.w/dat.f.s., pistis, faith {body of truth}*]) **which was once for all handed down to the saints** (παραδοθείση ἅπαξ τοῖς ἁγίοις [*aor.pass.pt.dat.f.s., paradidomi, hand over, + adv., hapax, once, once for all, + def.art.w/adj.dat.m.p., hagios, holy; saint*]).

ANALYSIS: VERSE 3

1. Jude’s brief greeting concluded, he plunges at once into the circumstances that have brought him to write this letter.
2. He has felt compelled to do so, he explains, by alarm at the threat poised by certain heretics to the spiritual well-being of believers to whom this letter was first sent.
3. The Church was threatened by the teaching of innovators of suspect orthodoxy and morality.
4. The exact import of the participial clause –“while I was making every effort to write to you...I felt the necessity” – is not easy to disentangle.
5. According to the generally accepted interpretation of these words, it had been his earnest intention “to write to you about our common salvation”, i.e. (presumably) to prepare a general and positive presentation of the faith for their benefit; but this project had to be interrupted by the urgent need to deal with a particular critical situation.
6. Various interpreters fail to detect in his words any implication of a change of plan.
7. To them the phrases “our common salvation” and “the faith once for all delivered to the saints” are not antithetical, but complimentary.
8. All the writer is saying is that “being very eager to write” his correspondents, he has been constrained by the emergency.
9. Both exegeses make good sense and are syntactically possible, but in favor of the former it is urged:
  - a. That the latter makes the sentence unnecessarily labored and repetitive.

- b. That the difference of tense between the two infinitives “to write” (the first is present tense, the second is aorist) seems to distinguish a general intention which fell short of accomplishment from a concrete action carried through.
  - c. That the structure and wording of the sentence suggest a contrast between a general essay on the faith and a peremptory exhortation to defend it.
10. If we accept the former exegesis, it is fruitless to speculate whether the writer ever fulfilled his original plan or not.
  11. The scenario presented, incidentally, is entirely lifelike, and agrees well with the view taken in the Introduction that Jude is a genuine letter directed at a particular situation and is not a general homily.
  12. For the affectionate “Beloved/Dear friends” (literally, “loved”), see v.1b and 2Pet.2:11.
  13. By our “common salvation”, some think he means the salvation which he, a Jewish Christian, and they, Gentile Christians, share alike.
  14. But in the absence of any other reference in the letter to such a distinction, this is artificial.
  15. Almost certainly, the expression means “the salvation which we Christians share in common”.
  16. It brings out the corporate nature of salvation as understood by Judaism, with its consciousness of being the people of God, and even more vividly by Christianity, with its conviction of union with Christ.
  17. This is one of the most characteristic differences between it and Hellenistic piety, in which salvation (esp. of the mystery cults) tended to be a private experience of the individual.
  18. The Greek phrase “while I was making every effort” contains a present continuous participle, which refers to Jude’s interrupted studies with a view to publishing a detailed doctrinal treatise on “our common salvation”.
  19. We have such a detailed treatise in our Book of Romans.
  20. Jude was much engaged in this project when circumstances redirected his energies.
  21. In the words “I felt the necessity” (or “I found it necessary”), the Greek verb (aor.act.ind., echo) is aorist, thus standing in contrast to the present linear participle “making every effort”.
  22. He has been driven by alarming news “to write” (aorist infinitive versus present infinitive in the preceding clause of grapho, “to write”) in such a fashion as “appealing” (pres.act.part. of parakaleo) to his audience to “contend earnestly for” their convictions.
  23. The verb (pres.dep.infin., epagonizomai) is exceptionally strong, and the picture conjured up by it and its cognates is of athletics, a wrestling match or some other contest at the games.
  24. This metaphor is vivid in the Pastorals, which speak of “the good fight of the faith”, or simply “the good fight” (1Tim.6:12; 2Tim.4:7ff).
  25. Paul draws on the arena, stadium, or battlefield to drive home the rigorous demands of the Christian life (1Cor.9:24-27; Eph.6:10-17) or of the apostolic ministry (Col.1:29).
  26. The Greek writers never tire of comparing the life of virtue to the strenuous training and toilsome encounters of athletes (Plutarch, Mor. 593de).
  27. Here, the cause that needs vigorous defense is “the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints”.
  28. This is an extremely important expression which, taken in conjunction with “our common salvation”, adds precision to our author’s conception of Christianity.
  29. Clearly “the faith” is not man’s response to the doctrinal message, but to the actual message itself.

30. Faith is used here in the objective sense of revealed truth/doctrine (cp. Acts.6:7; 13:8; 14:22; 16:5; 1Cor.16:13; 2Cor.13:5; Gal.1:23; 3:23; 6:10; Eph.4:13; Phil.1:25,27; Col.1:23; 1Tim.3:9,13; 4:1,6; 5:8; 6:10,21; 2Tim.1:13; 2:18; 3:8; 4:7; Ti.1:1,13; Jude.1:3).
31. Moreover, it “has been delivered”, i.e., handed down, committed, and entrusted with the idea of further transmission within the Church.
32. The agents of the action of this verb are human beings (see Lk.1:2; Acts.16:4; Rom.6:17; 1Cor.11:2; 2Thess.2:15; 3:6; 2Tim.2:1ff).
33. The custodians are “the saints”, or the Church at large.
34. The qualifying adverb “once for all” points to the apostolic era (first century AD).
35. During the period of the alpha Church, the deposit was made.
36. By the time Jude wrote, the process was well advanced.
37. This same adverb (hapax) is used again in v.5 in connection with the consummation of a process.
38. Apostolic Christianity is viewed here as a system of revealed teaching/doctrine, which is by its very nature unalterable and normative.
39. Apostolic teaching, not whatever be the current theological fad, is the hallmark of authentic Christianity.
40. Because Christianity is a historical faith, the witness of the original hearers and their circle, the apostles, is determinative of what we can know about Jesus.
41. We cannot get behind the N.T. witness, nor can we get beyond it, though we must accurately interpret it to each successive generation.
42. The person whose witness outruns the N.T. canon is to be rejected (2Jn.9–10).
43. Jude is simply displaying the same concern that his readers should adhere to the primitive apostolic faith as Paul does so frequently in his letters (cf. 2Cor.11:3,4; Gal.1:8,9; Col.2:6-8; 1Thess.2:13; 2Thess.3:6).
44. Here, Jude attacks antinomianism with the same passion as Paul in Galatians attacks legalism.
45. Both are perversions of the gospel.
46. The defense of this faith must be continuous, costly, and agonizing: the cost of being unfashionable, the agony of seeking to express the faith in a way that is really comprehensible to contemporary man.
47. Contending for the faith is illustrated in the verses that follow.
48. The Bible and its teachings have come under attack through the centuries and God has raised up individuals to defend it against all manner of attack.