

# THE LETTER OF JUDE

## 1. Who wrote the Letter of Jude?

### 1.1. Internal Evidence

1.1.1. The author quotes from *I Enoch*, a second-Temple Jewish writing, (Jude 14 = *I Enoch* 1:9) and another Jewish apocryphal work in Jude 9, possibly what early Christian writers identified as the *Assumption of Moses*. (Origen claims to know of the work from which the author quotes in Jude 9 [*De Prin.* 3.2.1; see also Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 6.15.132-33].) What does the fact that imply about the author's religious and ethnic background?

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1.1.2. What does the author's comment in Jude 17 imply about his identity in relation to the apostles?

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1.1.3. Who is the author according to the salutation of the Letter of Jude (Jude 1)?

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1.1.4. To designate himself simply as "a brother of James" implies that this James has a certain eminence in the early church, or at least among his intended readers, for otherwise he would have to identify this James further.

Of which James do you think Jude is a brother? (See Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18; Gal 2:9, 12; 1 Cor 15:7.) (See also Mark 6:3 = Matt 13:55.)

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1.2. External Evidence

1.2.1. There are some possible traces of the Letter of Jude in the works of the apostolic fathers (*Mart. Pol.*, introd. = Jude 2; *Did.* 2:7 = Jude 22-23; *Did.* 4:1 = Jude 8; *Barn.* 2:10; 4:9 = Jude 3-4; 2 *Clem.* 20:4 = Jude 6; *Herm. Sim.* 5. 7. 2 = Jude 8). This indicates that the Letter of Jude was probably influential in the early church, and, therefore, considered authentic.

1.2.2. The Muratorian canon counts the Letter of Jude as canonical and authentic: “But the letter of Jude and the two superscribed with the name of John are accepted in the universal [church].” Likewise, according to Eusebius, Clement of Alexandria accepts the Letter of Jude as authentic and, therefore, from the apostle Jude in his work *Hypotyposes* (see *H. E.* 6.14.1). In his *Instructor*, he quotes from Jude 5-6, 11 and attributes the passages to Jude (3.8); likewise in his *Stromata*, he attributes Jude 8-17 to Jude (3.2).

1.2.3. Nonetheless, there was some doubt about the Letter of Jude. Eusebius counted it as among the antilegomena: “Such is the story of James, to whom is said to belong the first of the letters called ‘universal’. It is to be observed that its authenticity is denied, since few of the ancients quote it, as is also the case with the letter called Jude’s” (*H. E.* 2.23.25).

How would you account for the less than unanimous acceptance of the Letter of Jude in the early church?

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1.3. Little is known of the life of Jude. As indicated, he was Jesus’ brother (Mark 6:3 = Matt 13:55), and, apparently, along with the rest of Jesus’ brothers, did not believe in Jesus until after his resurrection (see John 7:3-8). Probably, he was present in the upper room of a house before the giving of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost (Acts 1:14). If Paul’s reference to “the brothers of the

Lord” includes him, Jude was married and had an evangelistic ministry (1 Cor 9:5). Eusebius cites a tradition from Hegesippus to the effect that c. 95 two grandsons of Jude, the brother of Jesus, were brought before the emperor Domitian because their Davidic descent made them potentially dangerous as political agitators. But since they were determined to be simple farmers, these men were released (*H.E.* 3.19-20.7; 3.32.5-6).

## ● 2. *To whom was the Letter of Jude written?*

What does Jude 1b indicate about the intended readership of the Letter of Jude?

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## ● 3. *When was the Letter of Jude written?*

### 3.1. Internal Evidence

The following data have relevance to the dating of the Letter of Jude.

3.1.1. In Jude 17, Jude speaks about the apostles as if removed temporally from the readers, insofar as he exhorts his readers to remember that the apostles predicted the coming of “scoffers.”

3.1.2. In Jude 3, Jude speaks about the “faith once delivered unto the saints,” implying that the contents of faith have been settled for some time.

What do these data imply about the date of the Letter of Jude?

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### 3.2. External Evidence

3.2.1. The dating of the composition of the Letter of Jude may be tied to that of 2 Peter. Of the twenty-five verses in the Letter of Jude, fifteen appear, either in whole or in part, in 2 Peter, primarily in chapter two and the beginning of chapter three, which deal with the problem of false teachers.

There are several verbal agreements between the two letters. Thus, there is probably some sort of literary relationship between them. The table below shows the close similarity between the letters. (Bold = verbal agreement)

Jude	2 Peter
<p>4 For certain men have slipped in by <b>stealth</b>, those who were <b>long ago</b> destined to <b>judgment</b>—impious men perverting the grace of our God into <b>licentiousness</b> and denying the only Master and our Lord Jesus Christ....6 And <b>angels</b> who did not keep their positions but left their proper dwelling he has kept under the <b>nether darkness</b> in eternal fetters <b>for [the] judgment</b> of that great day. 7 As <b>Sodom and Gomorrah</b> and the surrounding cities...serve as <b>an example (deigma)</b> undergoing the penalty of eternal fire. 8 In the same way these dreamers also <b>defile the flesh</b>, reject <b>the lordship and blaspheme glories</b>.</p> <p>9 But when Michael, the archangel was disputing with Satan in controversy over the body of Moses, he did not <b>dare to bring a judgment of abuse (krisin...blasphêmias)</b>.</p> <p>10 <b>But these men</b> abuse whatever they do not know, and whatever they, <b>like irrational animals, by nature</b> understand, in that they are <b>corrupted (phtheirontai)</b>.</p> <p>11 Woe to them because they went <b>on the path</b> of Cain and abandon themselves to the error of <b>Balaam</b> for the sake of <b>gains</b>. 12 These men are the <b>blemishes</b> at your love-feasts, <b>feasting with you</b> without fear, <b>waterless</b> clouds, carried along by the winds...13 <b>For whom the nether darkness of darkness has been reserved forever</b>...16 Their mouths speak <b>extravagances</b>...17 <b>Remember</b> the words <b>spoken beforehand</b> by</p> <p><b>the apostles</b> of our <b>Lord</b> Jesus Christ;</p> <p>18 That they said to you that <b>in the last</b> time there will be <b>scoffers, walking after their own (heatôn)</b> ungodly <b>lusts</b>.</p>	<p>2:1 False teachers. Men who shall <b>stealthily</b> introduce destructive heresies...denying the Master who bought them. 2:2 And many shall follow their <b>licentiousness</b>...2:3 for whom <b>judgment</b>, pronounced <b>long ago</b>, is not idle. 2:4 For in God did not spare the <b>angels</b> when they sinned, but thrust them into Tartarus, to the pits of <b>nether darkness</b>, and delivered them to be kept <b>for judgment</b>...2:6 turning the cities of <b>Sodom and Gomorrah</b> into ashes...making <b>an example (hupodeigma)</b> of what is coming to the ungodly...2:10 Especially those who walk after the flesh in lust of defilement and despise <b>the lordship. Daring</b> (see Jude 9) and willful, they are not afraid when they <b>blaspheme glories</b>.</p> <p>2:11 Whereas angels... do not <b>bring an abusive judgment (blasphêmon krisin)</b> against them.</p> <p>2:12 <b>But these men, like irrational animals by nature</b> born for capture and destruction, abusing things about which they are ignorant, shall also be <b>destroyed (phthresontai)</b> in their <b>corruption (phthora)</b>. 2:15 They follow <b>on the path</b> of <b>Balaam</b>, the son of Bosor, who loved the <b>gain</b> of evil doing...2:13 <b>Blemishes</b> and blots <b>feasting with you</b>. 2:17 These men are <b>waterless</b> fountains and mists driven by storms...<b>for whom the nether darkness of darkness has been reserved forever</b>. 2:18 uttering futile <b>extravagances</b>. 3:2 <b>Remember</b> what was <b>spoken beforehand</b> by the holy prophets and the commandment of <b>the apostles</b> of your <b>Lord</b> and savior; 3:3 knowing this first of all that <b>in the last</b> days <b>scoffers</b> will come scoffing, <b>walking after their own (idias...autôn)</b> <b>lusts</b>.</p>

What are possible explanations for the similarity between the Letter of Jude and 2 Peter?

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3.2.2. If one author is dependent on the other’s work as a source, it is probable that Peter used the Letter of Jude. It would be less likely for 2 Peter to be a source for Jude, because the Letter of Jude is shorter—the tendency is for texts is to expand—and because Jude does not cite Peter as an authority, which would be unexpected, since he quoted Enoch as such.

3.2.3. The date that one gives to the Letter of Jude must be consistent with the conclusion arrived at concerning the relationship between 2 Peter and the Letter of Jude and the date that you gave to the composition of 2 Peter. If the Letter of Jude is a literary source for 2 Peter and 2 Peter was written in the mid-60's or even as late as 68, what must the *terminus ad quem* of the Letter of Jude be? Does this agree with the internal, indirect evidence relating to the date of the composition of the Letter of Jude?

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3.2.4. Since it is unlikely that Peter used the Letter of Jude as a source, what should one conclude about the literary relationship between it and 2 Peter? What does this imply about the possible date of the composition of the Letter of Jude?

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3.3. What do you conclude about the date of the composition of the Letter of Jude?

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#### ● 4. *Where was the Letter of Jude written?*

There is no evidence to conclude anything about where the Letter of Jude was written.

#### ● 5. *What is the Letter of Jude?*

5.1. Outline of the Letter of Jude

A. 1-2: This represents the salutation of the letter.

B. 3-23: This represents the main body of the letter.

1. 3-4: Jude explains that the reason for his writing is the emergence of false teachers. He wants his readers to protect the “faith once delivered to the saints” from these false teachers who turn grace into licentiousness and disown the one Lord and master, Jesus Christ.

2. 5-7: Jude reminds his readers that in the past God has judged sin. He gives the examples of the generation of the exodus, fallen angels and Sodom and Gomorrah.

3. 8-19: Jude describes the false teachers as defiling the body and rejecting authority. He adds that they even dare to malign heavenly beings (“glories”), which the archangel Michael refused to do when disputing with Satan over Moses’ body. These men also pour abuse on what they do not know. He uses several comparisons and metaphors to describe them, and says that Enoch predicted their final judgment and destruction. He continues by saying that these men are malcontents, following their desires, speak arrogantly and court favor to gain their desired ends and are unspiritual (“soulish, not having the spirit”), although they make such distinctions. He exhorts his readers to remember that the apostles predicted the emergence of false teachers.

4. 20-23: Jude exhorts his readers to keep themselves in the faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keeping themselves in the love of God and waiting for the time when Jesus Christ will give eternal life. He tells them to help others who are in danger of the judgment of God.

C. 24-25: Jude concludes with a benediction.

5.2. As already noted, the Letter of Jude quoted directly from what is now known as *I Enoch* and even could be interpreted as believing that Enoch, “the seventh from Adam” (see *I Enoch* 60:8), actually wrote the work (14) (unless this is simply a designation for the purposes of identification). Since the reference to Michael, the archangel, disputing with Satan over Moses’ body is not found in the Old Testament, it is likely that his source for this is another apocryphal book (many suggest *The Ascension of Moses*). Jerome explained the reluctance of some to accept Jude as canonical as due to the fact of these apocryphal quotations (*De vir. ill.* 110). What is implied about the status *I Enoch* and any other apocryphal work that is cited the Letter of Jude? In other words, should these works be considered canonical also?

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**6. Why was the Letter of Jude written?**

From Jude 3-4, what do you conclude about the reason for Jude's writing his letter?

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