

JUDE 1:1 - WHO DO YOU SAY THAT I AM?

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I. Introduction

II. Background

A. Who is Jude?

1. One of three brothers of Jesus, perhaps the youngest although we don't know for certain
 - a) "James, Joses, Judas, and Simon" (Mark 6:2).
 - b) "James, Joses, Simon, and Judas" (Mtt. 13:55).
2. Almost nothing is known about the details of his life.

B. What motivated Jude to write?

1. Warning fellow believers to contend for the faith.
2. Be alert for and resist ungodly teachers who misinterpret God's forgiveness and grace as license to promote sinful, sensual behavior.
3. Guard against apostasy – the ultimate result of allowing these false teachers to continue operating *within* the church. (They have "crept in unnoticed" [v. 4].)
4. Gives numerous examples of *apostasy*: departing from a stance once held. This is an *internal* attack upon the church which had already begun to take effect at the time Jude wrote (approximately A.D. 65 or later).

III. Jude 1:1-2

- A. **Jude 1:1-2** Jude, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, To those who are called, sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ: Mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you.¹
- B. Boatload of theological riches.
- C. Opening phrase – what Jude *does* say, what Jude *doesn't* say.
 1. Bondservant [slave] of Jesus Christ!
 2. Brother of James, but *not* "brother of Jesus."
 - a) Potential leverage available to a family member of Jesus.

¹

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D. James

1. **James 1:1** James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad: Greetings.
 - a) Bondservant of the Lord Jesus.
 - b) No mention of being the brother of Jesus.

E. Both Jude and James, once skeptics of their brother Jesus, have now become willing slaves!

IV. Growing up with God as your brother.

A. Disbelief

1. Stories of illegitimacy – the virgin birth.
 - a) Mary was pregnant before marriage.
 - b) Nagging questions: Joseph's child, but where was His biological father?
 - c) Did Mary explain—it seems she must have—but who could believe such a far-fetched idea: people continue to reject it to our own time?
 - d) Then there were those rumors and stores—which persisted with Jesus until adulthood.
 - (1) **John 8:18-19** "I am One who bears witness of Myself, and the Father who sent Me bears witness of Me." Then they said to Him, "Where is Your Father?" Jesus answered, "You know neither Me nor My Father. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also."
 - (2) **John 8:41** "You do the deeds of your father." Then they said to Him, "We were not born of fornication; we have one Father--God."
2. Growth in wisdom and knowledge – how could this be God?
 - a) **Luke 2:46-52** Now so it was *that* after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers. So when they saw Him, they were amazed; and His mother said to Him, "Son, why have You done this to us? Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously." And He said to them, "Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" But they did not understand the statement which He spoke to them. Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them, but His mother kept all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.
3. During his ministry, Jesus not recognized or honored by siblings.
 - a) **Mark 6:2-4** And when the Sabbath had come, He began to teach in the synagogue. And many hearing *Him* were astonished, saying, "Where *did* this Man *get* these things? And what wisdom *is* this which is given to Him, that such mighty works are performed by His hands! "Is this not the carpenter, the Son of Mary, and brother of

James, Joses, Judas, and Simon? And are not His sisters here with us?" And they were offended at Him. But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his own country, among his own relatives, and in his own house."

4. Strange behavior and statements of their brother Jesus.

a) **Matthew 12:46-50** While He was still talking to the multitudes, behold, His mother and brothers stood outside, seeking to speak with Him. Then one said to Him, "Look, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, seeking to speak with You." But He answered and said to the one who told Him, "Who is My mother and who are My brothers?" And He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, "Here are My mother and My brothers! "For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother."

b) Jealousy?

(1) Popularity of Jesus.

(2) Difficulty of access.

(3) Not given special prominence or priority.

(4) It seems likely they would have harbored feelings much like the brothers of Jacob and said in their heart, "Who does this dreamer think he is?"

5. Feast of Tabernacles

a) **John 7:2-5** . . . His brothers therefore said to Him, "Depart from here and go into Judea, that Your disciples also may see the works that You are doing. "For no one does anything in secret while he himself seeks to be known openly. If You do these things, show Yourself to the world." For even His brothers did not believe in Him.

V. Testimony of Jude's Life

A. Transition to belief

1. Paul mentions that Jude's brother James saw Jesus after His resurrection from the dead (1Cor. 17:7).

2. Luke lists the brothers of Jesus among those waiting for the "promise of the Father" in the upper room prior to the Day of Pentecost (Acts 1:14).

a) Was Judas present too?

b) Or, as James related his experience did it have a life-changing impact on Judas?

B. The Powerful Testimony of Changed Lives

1. Paul, James, Jude – skeptics with intimate knowledge of the facts (Paul of scripture, James and Jude of their brother) – all of whom were radically changed after an encounter with the glorified Jesus.

2. **John 3:8** "The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit."

VI. Who is Jesus?

A. Is He a Legend?

1. Mentioned by numerous extra-Biblical historic sources.²
 - a) Classical writings (Pliny the Younger, Suetonius, Tacitus, Celsus, and others).
 - b) Jewish writings (Josephus, Talmud).
 - c) Christian writings immediately after the New Testament.
2. Who could concoct such a powerful legend?
 - a) The most widely-known figure in history.
 - b) The man around which B.C. becomes A.D.
 - c) The greatest cultural influence in all history with a huge impact on systems of government, education, civil rights, and excellence in work.
3. The Bible
 - a) The most widely published book of all time—into far more languages than any other literary work.
 - b) The most carefully studied and preserved text of all time. Untold man-hours and inkwells have been drained in pursuit and promulgation of its message.
 - c) The seamless integration of the New Testament with the Old.
 - d) Diversity of authors.
 - (1) a lawgiver (Moses), a general (Joshua), prophets (Samuel, Isaiah, et at.), kings (David and Solomon), a musician (Asaph), a herdsman (Amos), a statesman (Daniel), a priest (Ezra), a tax collector (Matthew), a physician (Luke), a scholar (Paul), and fishermen (Peter and John).
 - e) Time span – written over a span of many centuries with a supernaturally-orchestrated internal consistency.
4. How incredible that all this could be the result of vague unreliable recollections concerning a figure who did not actually exist—the embellished teachings of an imaginary Jewish rabbi from the 1st century!

B. Is He a Liar?

1. If a liar, then perhaps the most evil person who ever lived.
2. Mised incredible numbers of people down through history on a global scale.
3. Teachings directly oppose lying.

²

F. F. Bruce, *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?*, 6th ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1981, c1943). Robert E. Van Voorst, *Jesus Outside The New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000). ISBN 0-8028-4368-9.

- a) Raises the standard of conduct incredibly high—beyond external conformance ala the Law of Moses (10 commandments) to the level of the motives of the heart (Mtt. 5).
 - b) **1 Corinthians 15:13-19** But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching *is* empty and your faith *is* also empty. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up--if in fact the dead do not rise. For if *the* dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith *is* futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.
4. If a consummate liar, the entirety of His ministry and teaching was in opposition to His own character.
- C. Is He a Lunatic?
- 1. Radical and astonishing statements:
 - a) Claims of equality with the God of the Old Testament:
 - (1) **John 5:22-23** "For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son, that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.
 - (2) **John 17:5** "And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was."
 - (3) **John 14:9** Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"
 - (4) **Revelation 22:13** "I am the Alpha and the Omega, *the* Beginning and *the* End, the First and the Last." [Exclusive titles of the God of the OT.]
 - b) The source of eternal life
 - (1) **John 6:48-53** "I am the bread of life. . . . Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you." [The reaction of Jewish ears.]
 - (2) **John 8:51** "Most assuredly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he shall never see death."
 - (a) **John 8:52** Then the Jews said to Him, "Now we know that You have a demon! Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and You say, 'If anyone keeps My word he shall never taste death.'"
 - (b) **John 8:58** . . . "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM."
 - (3) **John 11:25** . . . "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live."
 - 2. Incredibly challenging and sublime statements:

- a) **Matthew 5:27-28** "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' "But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart."
- b) **Matthew 5:38-41** "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' "But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have *your* cloak also. And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two."
- c) **Matthew 5:44** " . . . love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you"
- d) **Matthew 11:28-30** "Come to Me, all *you* who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke *is* easy and My burden is light."

3. If these are the words of a lunatic, would to God we all were lunatics!
4. If these are the words of insanity, then normalcy is the true insanity!

D. Or is He Lord?

1. His influence in history disqualifies Him as a mere legend.
2. His purity and righteousness disqualify Him as a consummate liar.
3. His consistency of walk, sublime teaching, and self-sacrificing love disqualify him as a lunatic.
4. What else is left? Could it be that Jesus is Lord?
 - a) This was the conclusion of those who once rejected His claims: His brothers James and Jude and the Pharisee Saul of Tarsus.
 - b) It was also the testimony of the Apostle Peter.

VII. Opinions about Jesus

- A. **Matthew 16:13-14** When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" So they said, "Some *say* John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets."
- B. "Some say this . . . some say that . . ." – this is the spirit of antichrist which continues in our own age. It is the antichrist spirit which denies that Jesus is the Christ.
 1. **1 John 2:22-23** Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son. Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also.
 2. An essential element of false religions

- a) A denial of the deity of Jesus Christ, be it Jehova's Witnesses, Mormanism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Baha'i, Shintoism, Zoroastrianism, Neo-Paganism, Unitarian-Universalism, Rastafarianism, Scientology, or Atheism.
- b) False religions will always tip their hand—they are all ultimately powered by the spirit of antichrist which denies the One True Religion which is based on recognizing the deity of Jesus as the 2nd member of the triune Godhead.

C. Peter's response

1. **Matthew 16:15-17** He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed *this* to you, but My Father who is in heaven.
2. Peter had come to see beyond that which other men saw: that Jesus was a prophet, a great teacher, and a powerful worker of miracles—these sort of men had been seen before. But Jesus was different. Peter had come to realize the unique nature of Jesus as the promised Anointed One, the unique and only begotten Son of God.
3. How had this happened? It was not by wisdom or greater insight. Jesus indicated it had happened by the revelation of God--spiritual illumination which overcame the spirit of antichrist which dominated the culture in Peter's day as it does in ours.

D. God intended Jesus to be a controversy

1. When Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to the Temple for circumcision on the 8th day.
 - a) **Luke 2:34** Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, "Behold, this *Child* is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against . . ."

VIII. You do YOU say that He is?

- A. It is an unavoidable question: we must either accept Him or ultimately reject Him. There is no half-way position where we can skate past without confronting His claim on our life.
 1. In his book *Mere Christianity*, C. S. Lewis wrote:
 - a) A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic -- on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg -- or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God; or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon, or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.

- B. It is a private question – answered in the privacy of each individual heart. A friend, parent, husband, or wife cannot answer for you.
- C. It is a crucial question – answer it incorrectly and you will die in your sins – to be left standing before the perfection of God Almighty naked and ashamed.
 - 1. **John 8:23-24** [Jesus] said . . . "You are from beneath; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am *He*, you will die in your sins."

IX. Pray