

The Epistle of Jude | A Case Study in Apostasy

A Brief Background to the Text:

- ❖ Written by Jude, the brother of James and half brother of Jesus Christ
 - Much controversy surrounds this claim
- ❖ Jude's Epistle was written between AD 41-80, but a mid 60 date seems most likely
 - The letter is not explicitly addressed to any people or place, but content and context make it clear that he is writing to Christians from a Jewish background.
- ❖ The issue addressed is deceptive infiltrators who are leading Christians away from their faith.
 - Jude clearly knows exactly who these men are, but refers to them in a way that makes their identity impossible to discern today.

The Characteristics of these Certain Men vs. 5-8:

- ❖ Taken together, these three examples identify the characteristics and consequences of apostasy.
 - Like parables, it is advisable not to be too concerned with the details contained in each story referenced.
1. Rebellion against Salvation
 - Vs. 5 references to much of Exodus, specifically Exodus 32.
 2. Rebellion against God's rightful rule
 - Vs. 6 is one of the few references to an angelic rebellion
 3. Rebellion against Grace
 - The events of Sodom and Gomorrah were pre-law; the actions of the apostates are post-law
- ❖ Vs. 8 is an inversion of the previously cited examples. These men have trouble coming their way.

Addressing the Certain Men:

- ❖ Jude uses no kind words when describing these men.
 - Verses 12-13 are especially harsh
 - “Clouds they are without water...” = empty/ unkept promises.
 - “Carried about of winds...” = fairweather fans
 - “Trees whose fruit withereth” = Jude is basically calling these men Worthless
 - “Raging waves of the sea...” = Turbulent, disruptive, but without any direction
 - “Wandering stars...” = Again, an allusion to a lack of any usefulness
- ❖ It is apparently easy to discern what these men are all about, but because of their outward appearance they still carry influence to those around them. (See vs. 16)
- ❖ Verses 20-23 gives us Jude's strategy to overcome the influence of these individuals:
 - Vs. 20 - take personal responsibility for your own faith.
 - Vs. 21 - remain aware of your own need for God's mercy
 - Vs. 22 - compassion towards the ignorant makes a difference, but...
 - Vs 23 - the consequence of sin is eternal and terrifying.

Final Encouragements

- ❖ Jude closes with a reminder that the recipients of his letter are not facing this alone while plainly refuting the claims of the apostates
 - God has supplied us with the tools we need (Holy Spirit, Scripture) to overcome doubt.
 - God is joyful to save.
 - There is only one God and He is wise
 - God is our savior
 - God is eternally in control