

Understanding the book of JUDE

Canonicity- Clement of Alexandria (200AD) and Origen (225AD) quote it; Muratorian Canon includes it (170 AD); Eusebias, a 4th century Christian historian who lived in Caesarea wrote, “These things are recorded in regard to James, who is said to be the author of the first of the so-called catholic epistles. But it is to be observed that it is disputed; at least, not many of the ancients have mentioned it, as is the case likewise with the epistle that bears the name of Jude, which is also one of the seven so-called catholic epistles. Nevertheless we know that these also, with the rest, have been read publicly in very many churches.” Also from Eusebias, “Among the disputed writings, which are nevertheless recognized by many, are extant the so-called epistle of James and that of Jude, also the second epistle of Peter, and those that are called the second and third of John, whether they belong to the evangelist or to another person of the same name.”¹ Recognized by Athanasius (367AD) as part of the canon and officially recognized by council of Rome (382AD) and Carthage (397AD).

Author and Date- Interestingly the English name of Jude is not as accurate to the Greek as it is recorded in our English Bibles. Normally, the Greek *Ioudas* is translated as Judah (as in the son of Jacob) or else as Judas. We know that the physical brothers of Jesus (Matthew 13:55) were not believers during Jesus’ earthly ministry (John 7:5), but at least two of them became believers later (James, 1 Cor 15:7; 9:5 for “brothers” plural who are believers; the inference from Jude 1:1 is that he is the brother of James and Jesus). Most conservative scholars put the writing in the late 60s or 70s AD.

Theme- The primary theme in Jude is the call to defend “the” faith from godless false teachers who have crept in unnoticed. The following chart helps elucidate their character.²

Charge	Comment
v. 4 godless	General statement of impiety
v. 4 change the grace of God into a license for immorality	Immoral
v. 4 Deny Jesus Christ, our only Master and Lord	Deny the essence of Jesus; see titles
v. 8 dreamers pollute their own bodies, reject authority, and slander celestial beings	Immoral and rebellious
v. 10 speak abusively against whatever they don’t understand	rebellious
v. 12 shepherds who feed only themselves	Greedy

¹ Eusebias, Ecclesiastical History 2.23.25; 3.25.3 respectively.

² Peter David, *Pillar New Testament Commentary: Jude*, p. 20.

v. 12-13 no rain, no fruit, dead, wild waves	Fruitless and immoral
v. 16 men are grumblers and faultfinders; boast and follow their own evil desires; flattery	Immoral, greedy, rebellious
v. 18 scoffers who are ungodly	Immoral
v.19 men who cause division, do not have Spirit	Immoral, cause divisions

Relationship Between Jude and 2 Peter- which came first? Scholars are evenly split as to who quoted who, but it seems that based on Peter's prediction of false teachers coming in the future (2 Peter 2:1-2; 3:3) and Jude referencing them as already coming, it seems that 2 Peter was written first. Also, note the possible fulfillment and similarity of language in Jude 17-18 referencing 2 Peter 3:3.