

**Jude 1-2**  
(Reading: Jude 1-25)

**Jude's Position, Salutation, & Felicitation**

Jude is certainly an interesting letter, isn't it? Not exactly the kind you would want to get in the mail! And yet its place in God's Word tells us it is a message we desperately need to hear and heed.

One commentator titled this letter, 'The Acts of the Apostates.' He noted that while 'The Acts of the Apostles' describes the great world-wide advances of the gospel this very vividly pictures what is set against the good news.

Even the name of the author of this letter brings out a similar scene. For the name, Jude, is the same as Judas. And which person do you think of in connection with this name? It is none other than Judas Iscariot, the disciple who betrayed the Lord. Doesn't he stand out as the worst apostate this world has known?

Yet God chose to use a man bearing the same name to write a letter which is found in His Holy Bible. The sacred scriptures contain a book where, in the providence of God, the one word *Judas* has been written in large letters over what it means when people turn away from the truth of the Word of God.

**Where This Man Comes From**

So it is natural to wonder, first of all, WHERE THIS MAN COMES FROM. Indeed, this is our first aspect to the text this morning.

Now, while it is obvious the author of this letter could not be the Judas Iscariot we all know, which Judas could he be then? There are a number of distinct possibilities regarding this found in the New Testament.

One of these is the other Judas who was a disciple. In Luke 6:16 and Acts 1:13 he is known as "Judas son of James." Matthew in his gospel, chapter 10, verse 13, calls him Thaddeus.

There is also a Judas Barsabbas. In Acts 15:2 he is mentioned as being present at the Jerusalem Council. As a leader in the Church he was chosen, along with Silas, to deliver the letter explaining the decision of that Council to all the various churches.

And then there is Judas, the brother of James and the (half brother) of Jesus. His name is mentioned in Matthew 13:55 and Mark 6:3.

We might remember the Lord's half-brothers as those who at first had doubts about Him. In John 7 verse 5 we are told that the Lord's own brothers did not even believe in Him. And from Mark 3:21 we know that at one stage they came to take control of Him because they believed he had become deranged.

After His resurrection, though, Jesus appeared expressly to James, who became part of the church, together with Jesus' other brothers. In 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 9:5 Paul speaks of the travel the Lord's brothers did in the service of the gospel.

It is almost definitely the Judas who was the Lord's brother writing here. We may glean that from his designation of himself as "a brother of James," for there would be no doubt who that James was. The simple name *James* then meant one person, and one only, in the apostolic Church – James, the Lord's brother, the leader of the church in Jerusalem.

Normally in those days you would say who you are by telling who your father was. That Jude mentions his brother instead says a lot for who his brother was.

One may ask why Jude didn't directly come out with his family connection to the Lord. We are so used to name-dropping these days. And yet it is so at odds with the genuine Christian life. Already by calling himself "brother of James" Jude plays second fiddle to his brother. Like Andrew who is content to be known as Simon Peter's brother, so is Jude here with

James. And both Jude and Andrew could have resented their far greater brothers. Yet they have the gift of happily taking second place.

This is the humility that shows through as Jude calls himself “a servant of Jesus Christ.” He didn’t make anything of being the Lord’s actual brother but rather called himself a slave of Jesus. Because that’s what the word “servant” literally means here.

Jude doesn’t look to any physical connection here but the spiritual. Rather than draw in any earthly relation, he puts all this in the heavenly.

So the way Jude begins here is the same as his brother James does at the beginning of his letter. There is no mention of them being apostles. Thus they draw us in straight-away as well.

You see, this letter is for all who are in such a relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ. Because we’re fellow slaves of Jesus Christ, God’s Word is exactly for us. And notice that the one Jude is a servant of – “Jesus Christ” - is the Lord’s full name here. Not only is He Jesus the Saviour but Christ the Lord also.

Knowing who the author is also gives us a rough idea of when the letter was written. Because it would have been no later than the late 60’s A.D.. This is confirmed within in the letter itself as there is no reference to the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D..

This is also supported by church history. Eusebius relates a story from Hegesippus about this Jude’s grandsons being brought before the Roman Emperor Domitian in about 96 A.D.. The Emperor summoned them to meet him because he had heard they were grandsons of a brother of the Jesus Christ he had been told about.

It seems he was somewhat disappointed, though. What he met were men with calloused hands and small incomes, and so he despised them as inferior people and dismissed them. The same historian quotes them as being bishops a decade or two later. This makes it reasonable for their grandfather to have been alive well into the latter part of the 1<sup>st</sup> century.

There is still another aspect, though, to **WHERE THIS MAN COMES FROM**. Because where was he when he wrote this letter?

This is something which is not precisely known. It is known that Jude was an itinerant preacher. He went about visiting Christians in mainly Jewish communities. And what we will see next is how this was a letter for the general church at large and not a specific congregation. As a minister who got around he had a good insight into what was going on.

### **Who This Man Was Addressing**

Thus we consider now the second aspect to this opening passage. Now we come to **WHO THIS MAN WAS ADDRESSING**. This is what we find in the second half of verse 1. Here we note that the order of the words in many English translations is not the exact order in the original. Those translations have done this because “called” is the noun to which the words “loved” and “kept” refer. So this is describing exactly who those are who are loved by God the Father and kept by Jesus Christ.

Keeping it in its original order, though, makes it a clearly Christian letter. Aside from using the three-fold pattern which Jude likes to use through the letter we see here why he likes to use a three-fold pattern, because it is clear here that this statement is Trinitarian. While the name of the Holy Spirit is not specifically mentioned there can be no doubt that we see Him through the work He does.

Let’s then consider this statement in its original order. God the Father is the first person of the God-head. It is said here of Him that believers are “loved by God the Father.” That could also be translated as “beloved in God the Father.”

Which one doesn't essentially matter. While one tells us that believers are living in the sphere of God's love, and so are loved by Him, the other tells us of where God is actively loving His people. So God grants His love to His people and provides for them the sphere in which He expresses His love.

And isn't this what God the Father does? He the Almighty Creator is also the Faithful Sustainer. This is what we confess right at the beginning of the Apostles' Creed. He is our Heavenly Father through faith in Jesus Christ.

Our Lord spoke of this in John 16 verse 27. There He said to His disciples, "the Father himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God." Then we see that believers are "kept by Jesus Christ." In a situation where faithful believers are in great danger, Jude points them to constant and careful care for them. The same word for "kept" is used of the imprisonments of Peter and Paul in Acts 12 and Acts 25. It's a word also used in 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 1 to describe the inheritance reserved in heaven for us.

This is a continuous preservation with which Jesus keeps those who trust Him. As a result of what has happened in the past – Christ's sacrifice for us – He is looking after us until He comes back.

This is what our Lord says in His prayer for His disciples. As we read in John 17:12, He prayed, "While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me."

The apostles affirm this same care in the New Testament letters. John and Peter speak of this in their letters (1 John 5:18; 1 Peter 1:5). And who could forget the time Paul so definitively states this in 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 1 verse 12? There he declares, "I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day."

Then there is the work of the Holy Spirit. He is the One active in the calling of the Lord's own. And the Lord's own here are His chosen and precious, those we read in 2<sup>nd</sup>

Thessalonians 2. There in the verses 13 and 14 Paul says of these ones, "from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth. He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."

What a marvellous description this is of believers! Here is the noun to which both "loved" and "kept" refer to. The author of the Christian call is God. The call shows itself in holiness. Through your life and your character you are working out what God works in you. The calling which began in the secret purposes of God Himself, and is big enough to enfold heaven, is what's happening in your everyday life. There is nothing too small or insignificant that isn't part of this call of God.

Thus God's call is the most fitting climax to this trilogy of descriptions of your privileged position. God the Father loves you; God the Son keeps you; and God the Holy Spirit calls you.

### **What This Man Prays For Them**

And so it is that we move from seeing WHO THIS MAN IS ADDRESSING to realising WHAT THIS MAN PRAYS FOR THEM. This is the third aspect in this passage before us. Again it is spelt out to us through a triad of qualities – a three-some of attributes which will be familiar to us. After all, they are found in many of the New Testament letters.

There is a difference here, though. And it's a difference which isn't always so clear to us in our translations.

You see, an exact translation would be, "May mercy and peace and love be multiplied to you." However, since the idea of multiplying abstract qualities is hard to understand, translators express Jude's wish in terms of increasing the attributes of mercy, love, and peace.

But let's try a bit of maths here. I'm sure some of you remember those days of having to learn the "times-tables." By constant repetition we learnt how to multiply using that twelve-times table. You know how to do them now, don't you? 'How could I ever forget!' you say. In an instant you can tell me any of them. Yet you have to think still to do that. You can do it – but you have to do it to do it!

In the same way, Jude here doesn't say that we must multiple these qualities, rather that we may multiple them. Thus his prayer for them is that God will continue increasing these qualities in their lives. And just like multiplying makes numbers a lot bigger than adding them up, so he prays they will increase all the more in these qualities. If  $2 \times 2 = 4$ , and  $4 \times 4 = 16$ , and  $16 \times 16 = 256$ , and  $256 \times 256 = 65,536$ , just think of how much God can do when we live like this! That's the prayer here.

And then we consider these qualities. So, why 'mercy'? This is a word which rare in any of the apostolic greetings. It only appears four times. And yet each time it is used it is always against a background of false teaching. It's a reminder that not only at your regeneration or the judgment will you need mercy. Indeed, every day your life you need the mercy of God. It is nothing except undeserved mercy which can meet the constant needs of habitual sinners. Then, when you know yourself to be accepted with God, undeserving though you are, you gain a deep 'peace' in your life. It's the old Hebrew greeting of *Shalom* filled out with even deeper meaning.

This is what Paul describes in Romans 5. There he says in verse 1 that "since we been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." This is the quality which the apostle in Philippians 4:7 says is beyond understanding and yet it guards our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

It's not a peace which is the absence of conflict, however. Actually, because it is in us it transforms us especially when we're in the strongest spiritual warfare. And because of that change within you reach out through Christ to others.

This is where the quality of *love* comes in – or should I say where it goes out! As Paul says further on in Romans 5, verse 5, "God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us."

Love is the bond uniting believers to their Lord and to one another. Didn't Jesus Himself say this in John 13? There in the verses 34 and 35, He declares, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

In one way, or another, the word 'love' appears in each of the first three verses of Jude. It must be important. And could its importance here be that a major reason for apostasy occurring is lack of love among the brethren? In the letters to the seven churches in Revelation Philadelphia is followed by Laodicea. The church which shows its love is followed by the one which has no love. And we know what kind of witness the latter brings! Even faster than the Lord multiplies blessing among the saints a fellowship can be sadly and devastatingly divided.

So let's think about it, dear friend. Mercy from God, peace within, love for all men – all in the fullest measure! God the Father bringing mercy; God the Son bringing peace; and God the Holy Spirit bringing love.

Could you imagine a more comprehensive prayer of Christian greeting? Isn't that what we ought to pray? Even more, isn't that what we ought to do?