

Dr. David A. deSilva,

2 Peter and Jude

Session 4

1) Abstract, 2) Briefing Document, 3) Study Guide, 4) FAQs

1) Abstract:

The provided text offers an **in-depth analysis** of the biblical letter of Jude, highlighting its **challenges and enduring contributions** to Christian discipleship. It explores why Jude is often overlooked, citing its **brevity, focus on judgment, obscure references, and checkered historical reception**. The author argues for Jude's authenticity, countering common objections related to its **Greek style, late date, and perceived appeals to church hierarchy**. Furthermore, the text examines Jude's core messages, including the **purpose of God's grace, accountability before God, and mutual accountability among believers**, while also identifying the **nature and dangers of the false teachers** addressed in the letter.

2) Briefing Document:

Briefing Document: The Letter of Jude - Themes, Challenges, and Contributions

Overview of the Letter of Jude

The letter of Jude, a brief epistle of only 25 verses, is "appropriately nestled toward the back of the New Testament," often "revered but conveniently forgotten." It presents several challenges to the modern reader due to its brevity, its focus on judgment and condemnation, its obscure references to Old Testament and extra-biblical texts, and its "checkered reception over the course of church history" (DeSilva, Session 4, p. 1). Despite these challenges, Dr. David A. DeSilva argues that Jude makes "at least three vital contributions to the ongoing work of discipleship and ministry" (DeSilva, Session 4, p. 1).

Key Themes and Contributions of Jude

DeSilva highlights three primary contributions of the Letter of Jude:

1. **Purpose of God's Grace:** Jude reinforces the New Testament conviction that "God's grace in Jesus Christ has a purpose: our liberation from the passions and cravings of our old self and our transformation into a new self that will stand blameless in God's sight" (DeSilva, Session 4, p. 1). Any other response to God's grace, or any other use of it, is considered a "denying our only master and Lord Jesus Christ." This aligns with John Wesley's emphasis on salvation not only from sin's penalty but also from its power, enabling a life of "holiness and righteousness" (DeSilva, Session 4, p. 1).
2. **Accountability Before God and Ministerial Integrity:** Jude "keeps us aware of our accountability before God, that is, of the certainty of God's judgment" (DeSilva, Session 4, p. 2). This theme is particularly linked to ministerial integrity, prompting the question: "are we in the business of religion to serve God's purposes for the people God has entrusted to us, or are we in the business of religion to serve our own interests?" (DeSilva, Session 4, p. 2). The ongoing scandals in religious institutions serve as a stark reminder of these "ever-present" dangers.
3. **Mutual Accountability within the Community:** Jude emphasizes "our accountability to one another and our responsibility toward one another to hold each other accountable" (DeSilva, Session 4, p. 2). This message is countercultural, especially in the 21st-century Western church, where individual self-determination is highly valued. Jude "emboldening us to intervene to restore brothers and sisters in the Lord who are moving in a direction contrary to the direction in which God's grace would impel us, humbling us to listen when we are the object of such interventions" (DeSilva, Session 4, p. 2).

Authorship and Dating

The author identifies himself as "Judas, Jude, a slave of Jesus Christ and a brother of James" (DeSilva, Session 4, p. 2). This identification strongly suggests Jude, the half-brother of Jesus, given James's prominence as a leader in the Jerusalem Church (DeSilva, Session 4, p. 2). While 19th-century historical criticism invited questions

of authenticity, DeSilva argues for Jude's genuine authorship, refuting arguments based on alleged late 1st or early 2nd-century characteristics, the level of Greek, and the interpretation of verses 17-18 (DeSilva, Session 4, p. 3-4).

Arguments for authenticity include:

- **Lively Expectation of Judgment:** Jude "exhibits a lively expectation, at least of God's decisive intervention, to judge the world," unlike later texts that address a perceived delay in Christ's return (DeSilva, Session 4, p. 3).
- **Absence of Church Hierarchy:** "No such appeals appear in Jude's letter," nor any "mention of church offices," which would be expected in later compositions (DeSilva, Session 4, p. 3).
- **"The Faith" as Doctrine:** The use of "the faith" to describe a "body of doctrines" is not a sign of late authorship, as this usage appears "very early in the history of the Church," even in Galatians 1:23-24 (DeSilva, Session 4, p. 3).
- **Greek Fluency:** While a Galilean craftsman's son, Jude's "experience in Jerusalem at the center of leading a religious movement in a multilingual city" and his missionary work "in Galilee" and potentially the Decapolis would have necessitated and facilitated growth in Greek fluency (DeSilva, Session 4, p. 4). He also likely "avail himself of the help of other Christians who were themselves more familiar with the Greek language" (DeSilva, Session 4, p. 4).
- **Remembering Apostolic Predictions:** Jude 17-18 tells the audience to "remember...the predictions of the apostles," which means remembering what they *said*, not necessarily that they were dead. The presumption that the audience "will have heard these words from the apostles' own lips" places them "most naturally, in the first generation of the Church's existence" (DeSilva, Session 4, p. 4).
- **Rootedness in Palestinian Jewish Traditions:** The letter's "biblical phrases...tend to reflect the Hebrew text of the Old Testament more closely than the Septuagint" (DeSilva, Session 4, p. 5). Furthermore, Jude's "dramatic" use of 1 Enoch and "acquaintance with extra-biblical traditions about biblical figures like Cain" (DeSilva, Session 4, p. 5), found in Palestinian texts, point to a Palestinian Jewish background.

The letter's date is estimated "any time between about 50 and 80 AD," based on the prominence of James and the likely lifespan of Jesus' younger brother (DeSilva, Session 4, p. 5). The absence of temple references is not considered useful for dating due to the letter's brevity.

Audience

Jude tells "very little about his audience," including their location or ethnic constituency (DeSilva, Session 4, p. 5-6). However, the letter's content assumes familiarity with "Jewish traditions about Cain, the fallen angels, and Moses, not found in the canonical scriptures," and "some degree of familiarity with and respect for First Enoch" (DeSilva, Session 4, p. 6). This suggests an audience "composed largely of Greek-speaking Jewish Christians" potentially with "a substantial presence of Gentile converts" (DeSilva, Session 4, p. 6). An "urban audience within Palestine" would also explain why Jude wrote in Greek rather than Aramaic (DeSilva, Session 4, p. 6).

Jude describes his audience as "those who are summoned or called, invited, who are beloved in God the Father and kept in Jesus Christ" (DeSilva, Session 4, p. 6). This language, once applied to historic Israel, now describes believers in Jesus. The concept of "being kept" is a prominent theme, contrasting the audience "kept in Jesus Christ" (v. 1) with the "intruding teachers...kept by God...for the dark gloom of the underworld" (v. 13) like the "fallen angels...kept in eternal chains" (v. 6) (DeSilva, Session 4, p. 6).

The Problem of Intrusion and False Teachers

Jude's letter addresses a "very specific problem and situation, the appearance of teachers from outside a particular congregation or group of congregations" (DeSilva, Session 4, p. 7). These "certain people have wormed their way in, people who were set down long ago for this condemnation, ungodly people transforming the grace of our God into shameless self-indulgence, and denying our only Lord and Master, Jesus Christ" (Jude 1:4, DeSilva, Session 4, p. 7).

These interlopers are characterized by:

- **Self-Serving Motives:** They act from "self-serving motives rather than genuine love for the believers" (DeSilva, Session 4, p. 7).

- **Ecstasy-Based Revelation:** Their errors stem from their "dreaming," suggesting their teaching and authority were based on "ecstasy-based revelation," claiming "direct contact with the divine" (DeSilva, Session 4, p. 8).
- **Ethical Malpractice:** Jude "will, in fact, take issue more with the teacher's ethical practice than with their doctrine" (DeSilva, Session 4, p. 8). They are accused of "transforming the grace of our God into shameless self-indulgence, and denying our only Lord and Master, Jesus Christ" (Jude 1:4). This denial is interpreted as a "lack of interest in obeying Jesus, rather than confessing Jesus" (DeSilva, Session 4, p. 8).
- **Perversion of Grace:** Their principal failure is their "refusal to align themselves with God's purposes for the favor that God had extended to the disobedient" (DeSilva, Session 4, p. 8). They are "violating this sacred bond, of perverting God's generous kindness in forgiving rather than punishing sins by making room in their lives and quite possibly encouraging other believers also to make room in their lives for self-indulgent rather than God-honoring practices" (DeSilva, Session 4, p. 9).
- **Seeking Personal Profit:** Jude portrays them as "no better than the many other windbags peddling their philosophies or religions in the marketplace, seeking a means of profit from their marks, never above indulging both the belly and the loins" (DeSilva, Session 4, p. 9).
- **Marked for Condemnation:** They are "marked out long ago for this condemnation," and their behavior leads to a "bad end when God intervenes to hold them accountable" (DeSilva, Session 4, p. 9). Historical examples like Cain, Balaam, Korah, fallen angels, Sodom, and the Exodus generation serve as warnings.

Discerning True Teachers

The situation Jude addresses reflects a "resurgence of prophecy within the early Christian movement" (DeSilva, Session 4, p. 10). The early church needed to "test what was spoken in the Spirit to certify that it was, in fact, a reliable word from the Lord" (DeSilva, Session 4, p. 10). Jude contributes to this discernment by urging his hearers to "contend for the faith, the convictions about God's interventions and about the way of life that finds mercy before God that they have shared" (DeSilva,

Session 4, p. 8). This "faith" is understood as "a body of revealed teaching that shapes both convictions and practice" (DeSilva, Session 4, p. 8).

Jude's letter provides "one more window into this phenomenon of helping congregations discern and learn how they themselves can discern the reliable teacher from the one who will lead them astray from the faith once for all passed down to the saints and lead them astray from the direction in which this faith would impel them in their own lives" (DeSilva, Session 4, p. 11).

3) Study Guide:

Jude's Urgent Call to Contend for the Faith: A Study Guide

I. Overview of the Letter of Jude

- **Placement and Neglect:** Jude is a short, often overlooked New Testament letter, rarely appearing in lectionaries or serving as a subject for church studies. Its brevity and challenging content contribute to its obscurity.
- **Challenges for the Modern Reader:** **Brevity:** Only 25 verses, offering a narrow view into the addressees' lives and the situation Jude addresses. This limits understanding of the author and audience.
- **Focus on Judgment and Condemnation:** A "rant" against individuals exploiting congregants for personal gain, promoting a strong stance on God's judgment and clear boundaries in Christian practice, which contrasts with 21st-century values of tolerance and pluralism.
- **Obscure References:** Frequent allusions to Old Testament episodes and extra-biblical texts (e.g., First Enoch, Aramaic targumim), requiring significant prior Jewish literary knowledge for full appreciation.
- **Checkered Reception:** Divided opinion on its authority in the early church due to its use of extra-biblical texts; Luther questioned its value for the New Testament canon.

II. Contributions of Jude to Discipleship and Ministry

- **Purpose of God's Grace:** Reinforces that God's grace in Jesus Christ aims for liberation from old passions and transformation into a blameless new self. It emphasizes salvation not just from sin's penalty but also its power, leading to holiness and righteousness (echoing John Wesley).
- **Accountability Before God:** Highlights the certainty of God's judgment, particularly linking it to ministerial integrity. It prompts self-reflection on whether religious engagement serves God's purposes or self-interest, serving as a reminder against scandals that shame the gospel.
- **Accountability to One Another:** Promotes mutual responsibility to intervene and restore erring believers, and to humbly receive such interventions. This challenges contemporary Western Christian values of individual self-determination.

III. Authorship and Dating

- **Identity of the Author:** "Judas, a slave of Jesus Christ and a brother of James" (Jude 1).
- The most probable identification is Judas, the half-brother of Jesus and brother of James (who became a prominent leader in the Jerusalem Church after Jesus' resurrection).
- Identifying oneself by a brother rather than a father suggests the brother's significant prominence.
- **Arguments Against Authenticity (and Rebuttals):** **Late 1st/Early 2nd Century Authorship (post-apostolic signs):** *Waning expectation of Christ's return:* Jude exhibits a "lively expectation" of God's decisive judgment, with nothing suggesting a delay.
- *Appeal to church hierarchy:* Jude contains no such appeals; no mention of church offices.
- *Degeneration of "faith" to a body of doctrines:* "The faith" as a set of convictions appeared very early (e.g., Galatians 1:23-24, Philippians 1:27), not exclusively a late development. Paul himself uses it in this sense.
- **Level of Greek:** Assumes a Galilean craftsman's son wouldn't write such Greek.

- Rebuttals: Jude's potential profession, experience in multilingual Jerusalem (contact with Greek-speaking diaspora Jews), missionary work in Greek-speaking areas (Galilee, Decapolis), and the possibility of using a Greek-speaking scribe. Jude's Greek is noted for wide vocabulary, not exceptional style.
- **Jude 17-18 ("Remember the predictions of the apostles"):** Allegation: Looks back on the apostles' deaths.
- Rebuttal: The audience is told to *remember what the apostles had said*, not that the apostles are dead. This implies the audience heard these words directly from the first generation of the Church.
- **Positive Indications of Authenticity: Rootedness in Palestinian Jewish Traditions:** Biblical phrases reflect the Hebrew Old Testament (not Septuagint) (e.g., Jude 12 vs. Proverbs 25:14, Jude 13 vs. Isaiah 57:20).
- Use of First Enoch, a text widely read in Palestine and authoritative in communities like Qumran (Essene movement).
- Acquaintance with extra-biblical traditions about biblical figures (e.g., Cain) found in Palestinian texts (Aramaic targumim).
- **Date:** No clear internal indications for dating, but presuming James's prominence and Jude's likely lifespan (as Jesus' younger brother), a date between **50 and 80 AD** is plausible.
- The absence of references to the Temple's standing or destruction is not a reliable dating tool due to the letter's brevity.

IV. Author's Self-Presentation and Audience

- **Modesty and Authority:** Jude calls himself a "slave of Jesus Christ" (an honorific for those serving God single-mindedly, like Moses, Joshua, David, Paul, James, John) and a "brother of James" (linking himself to the prominent leader of the Jesus movement in Judea). He does not identify as "brother of Jesus" to preserve the Lord's supreme status.
- **Audience Description:** Jude provides very little direct information: no location, no explicit ethnic constituency.

- **Assumptions from Content:** Familiarity with Jewish traditions (Cain, fallen angels, Moses) not found in canonical scriptures.
- Familiarity with and respect for First Enoch.
- This suggests an audience largely composed of **Greek-speaking Jewish Christians**, possibly with some Gentile converts (like Cornelius).
- A Palestinian urban audience would fit: Jude writes in Greek, and such settings would be more susceptible to the "relaxation of moral standards" Jude addresses (e.g., Greek symposia influencing Christian agape meals).
- **Audience Identity (as told by Jude):** "Those who are summoned," "beloved in God the Father," and "kept in Jesus Christ." This applies language previously used for Israel to the Christian community.
- "Kept": This theme is prominent. The audience is "kept" for a purpose (eternal life), while the intruders are "kept" for judgment (dark gloom).

V. Structure and Key Themes

- **Opening Formula:** Jude expands the typical first-century letter opening (sender to recipient, greetings) with a wish for "mercy and peace and love" to be multiplied, establishing goodwill and introducing key themes.
- **Core Message (Jude 3-4):** Jude initially intended to write about "shared salvation" but was compelled to shift focus due to urgent developments.
- **Urgency:** "Contend for the faith that has been handed down to the saints once for all."
- **The Problem:** "Certain people have wormed their way in," described as "ungodly people transforming the grace of our God into shameless self-indulgence, and denying our only Lord and Master, Jesus Christ."
- **Interlopers' Characteristics:** From outside the congregation ("sneaking in," "worming their way in").
- Base teaching on "dreaming" (ecstasy-based revelation, claiming direct divine contact).
- Present themselves as teachers/spiritual leaders ("shepherding" image).

- **Principal Failure:** Refusal to align with God's purposes for grace; using grace as a "license for self-indulgence" rather than for deliverance and transformation. This violates the "ethic of giving and returning favor."
- **Not Gnostics:** Unlikely to be Gnostics; no Christological controversy. Their "denying our only Master and Lord Jesus Christ" is more about disobedience than doctrinal denial.
- Self-identify as Christians but their "trajectory of their lives suggests otherwise."
- Compared to "windbags peddling their philosophies" seeking profit and indulging "belly and loins."
- "Ungodly" and "marked out long ago for this condemnation" (destined for judgment).
- **The "Faith":** A body of revealed teaching that shapes both convictions and practice. Jude casts himself and his hearers as defenders of this faith against interlopers who threaten its integrity.
- **Emphasis on Ethical Practice:** Jude takes issue more with the teachers' ethical failures than their doctrine.
- **Historical Examples of Judgment (Jude 5-16):** Jude demonstrates that those who behave like the interlopers meet a "bad end." Examples include:
 - Cain
 - Balaam
 - Korah and his party
 - Rebel angels
 - People of Sodom
 - Exodus generation
- **Resurgence of Prophecy and Discernment:** The context for Jude's letter includes the widespread charismatic activity in the early church. This necessitated testing what was spoken in the Spirit.

- **Warnings against False Prophets:** Jesus warned disciples to recognize false prophets "by their fruits."
- **Tests for Teachers:** Paul (Colossians) warned against boasting of visions or austere lifestyles as guarantees of authenticity. 1 John offered ethical and doctrinal tests (acknowledging Christ incarnate, love for brothers/sisters). The Didache provided practical guidelines for itinerant prophets (limited sustenance, expulsion for soliciting money).
- Jude helps congregations discern reliable teachers from those who lead astray.

Quiz: The Letter of Jude

Instructions: Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. Why is the letter of Jude often "conveniently forgotten" or overlooked in modern Christian practice, according to DeSilva?
2. Name two specific challenges that the letter of Jude presents to a modern reader.
3. Beyond simply forgiveness, what does Jude emphasize as the purpose of God's grace in Jesus Christ?
4. How does Jude's emphasis on "accountability to one another" challenge a common 21st-century Western value in churches?
5. What is the primary reason the author identifies himself as "a slave of Jesus Christ and a brother of James" rather than "a brother of Jesus"?
6. Briefly explain one argument against Jude's authenticity based on alleged "post-apostolic" characteristics, and DeSilva's rebuttal.
7. What evidence suggests Jude's letter is rooted in "Palestinian Jewish traditions"?
8. Given the lack of explicit audience information in Jude's letter, what kind of audience does DeSilva suggest based on the letter's content and Jude's sphere of influence?

9. According to Jude, what is the principal failure of the "ungodly people" who "wormed their way in" among the believers?
10. How does the broader context of "the resurgence of prophecy within the early Christian movement" help us understand Jude's concerns about the interlopers?

Quiz Answer Key

1. The letter of Jude is often forgotten due to its brevity, its strong focus on judgment and condemnation which contrasts with modern values of tolerance, and its frequent obscure allusions to extra-biblical texts. It is also rarely included in standard Sunday lectionaries or used for book studies in churches.
2. Two challenges are its brevity, offering a narrow window into the lives of its addressees and the situation it addresses, and its focus on judgment and condemnation, which is often seen as out of step with 21st-century values of tolerance and pluralism. Additionally, its obscure references to extra-biblical texts require extensive prior knowledge.
3. Jude emphasizes that God's grace in Jesus Christ has a purpose beyond mere forgiveness: it aims for liberation from the passions and cravings of our old self and transformation into a new self that will stand blameless. It highlights salvation from both the penalty and the power of sin, leading to a life of holiness.
4. Jude's emphasis on "accountability to one another" and intervening to restore erring brothers and sisters directly challenges the prominent 21st-century Western church value of an individual's right to self-determination, free from the "oppressive intervention of other people." It encourages mutual responsibility even when uncomfortable.
5. The author identifies himself as "a slave of Jesus Christ" to highlight his single-minded devotion and belonging to God, an honorific title for authoritative figures. He identifies as "a brother of James" because James was remarkably prominent in early Christian circles, leading the Jerusalem Church, whereas identifying as "brother of Jesus" might detract from Jesus' unique status as Lord.

6. One argument against Jude's authenticity is the alleged "degeneration of the word 'faith' from a dynamic relational term into a term that refers to a body of doctrines." DeSilva rebuts this by showing that "the faith" as a set of convictions appeared very early in church history (e.g., Galatians 1:23-24, 40 AD), not exclusively as a later development, and even Paul used it this way.
7. Jude's letter shows its rootedness in Palestinian Jewish traditions through its biblical phrases, which reflect the Hebrew Old Testament more closely than the Greek Septuagint. Furthermore, the author's extensive use of First Enoch, a text composed and widely read in Palestine, and acquaintance with extra-biblical traditions about figures like Cain from Aramaic targumim, indicate this connection.
8. Based on the audience's assumed familiarity with Jewish traditions not in canonical scriptures and respect for First Enoch, DeSilva suggests the audience was likely composed largely of Greek-speaking Jewish Christians, possibly with a substantial presence of Gentile converts. He also posits an urban Palestinian setting where they might be tempted by non-Jewish lifestyle practices.
9. The principal failure of the "ungodly people" is their refusal to align themselves with God's purposes for the grace He extended. They transform "the grace of our God into shameless self-indulgence," effectively denying the Lord by not obeying Him and using His generosity for self-serving rather than God-honoring practices.
10. The resurgence of prophecy in the early church meant there was a widespread expectation of charismatic gifts and words spoken "in the Spirit," necessitating discernment. Jude's concerns about interlopers claiming authority and basing their teaching on "dreaming" aligns with the need to "test everything" and recognize false prophets by their ungodly "fruits," as Jesus and Paul had warned.

Essay Questions

1. Discuss the four challenges Jude presents to the modern reader, as identified by DeSilva. How do these challenges impact the letter's reception and understanding in contemporary Christian contexts?

2. Analyze Jude's three "vital contributions to the ongoing work of discipleship and ministry." Choose one contribution and elaborate on its particular relevance or challenge for the 21st-century church.
3. Evaluate the arguments for and against the authenticity of the letter of Jude, as presented by DeSilva. Which arguments do you find most compelling, and why?
4. Describe the characteristics and behaviors of the "interlopers" or "false teachers" that Jude addresses in his letter. What specific dangers did they pose to the congregations, and how does Jude encourage his audience to respond?
5. Explain how the historical examples of judgment (Cain, Balaam, Korah, etc.) function within the letter of Jude. How do these examples contribute to Jude's polemic against the interlopers and his exhortation to the audience?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Agape Meal:** A communal meal practiced by early Christians, often associated with the Eucharist or Lord's Supper. Jude implies the interlopers were disrupting these.
- **Aramaic Targumim:** Aramaic paraphrases or translations of the Hebrew scriptures, often including additional explanatory or interpretive material. Jude's acquaintance with extra-biblical traditions found in these texts suggests Palestinian Jewish roots.
- **Canonical Acquaintance:** A biblical author or figure whose writings are part of the canon but about whom little personal detail is known, leading to a less intimate understanding compared to more prolific authors like Paul.
- **Charismatic Gifts:** Manifestations of the Holy Spirit, such as speaking in tongues, prophecy, and healing, prevalent in the early Christian movement. The resurgence of these gifts created a need to discern genuine from false spiritual expressions.
- **Christological Controversy:** Debates or disagreements concerning the nature and person of Jesus Christ. DeSilva notes that Jude does not appear to be driven by such a controversy, unlike some other New Testament letters.

- **Contend for the Faith:** Jude's urgent call to his audience to actively defend and uphold the body of revealed truth, convictions, and practices that define Christianity, especially against those who seek to corrupt it.
- **Didache:** An early Christian manual (Greek for "the teaching") from the late 1st or early 2nd century, covering liturgy, church order, and ethics. It provided guidelines for testing and welcoming itinerant prophets.
- **Ecstasy-based Revelation:** Spiritual experiences where individuals claim to receive direct, authoritative communication from the divine, often involving altered states of consciousness or "dreaming." The interlopers in Jude appear to base their authority on such claims.
- **Ethic of Giving and Returning Favor:** A social code in the first century where generosity from a giver created an obligation for the recipient to honor the gift and the giver's intentions by promoting their interests in return. Jude accuses the interlopers of violating this sacred bond.
- **Extra-biblical Texts:** Writings that are not included in the canonical scriptures (Old or New Testament). Jude's appeal to texts like First Enoch was a reason for its disputed authority in the early church.
- **First Enoch:** An important Jewish apocalyptic text, widely read and authoritative in Palestinian Jewish circles (like the Qumran community). Jude explicitly cites it and alludes to its themes.
- **Gnosticism/Gnostics:** A diverse ancient religious movement that emphasized secret knowledge (gnosis) as the means to salvation. DeSilva argues against painting Jude's adversaries as Gnostics due to insufficient evidence and a flawed understanding of Gnosticism's development.
- **Historical Criticism:** A method of biblical scholarship that emerged in the 19th century, applying historical and literary analysis to biblical texts, often leading to re-examination of authorship, date, and historical context.
- **Interlopers:** The "certain people" who "wormed their way in" among Jude's audience, presenting themselves as teachers but acting from self-serving motives, promoting self-indulgence, and threatening the integrity of the Christian faith.

- **Lectionaries:** Structured collections of scripture readings appointed for worship services on specific days or seasons. Jude is notably absent from standard Sunday lectionaries.
- **Ministerial Integrity:** The ethical soundness and faithfulness of those serving in religious leadership roles. Jude links God's judgment directly to the importance of serving God's purposes rather than self-interest in ministry.
- **Palestinian Jewish Traditions:** Religious and cultural practices, beliefs, and literature prevalent among Jewish communities in ancient Palestine. Jude's letter shows strong roots in these traditions through its allusions and textual preferences.
- **Polemic:** A strong verbal or written attack on someone or something. Jude's letter is described as a "fiery polemic" against the interlopers.
- **Septuagint:** The Koine Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament), widely used by Greek-speaking Jews throughout the eastern Mediterranean. Jude's preference for the Hebrew text over the Septuagint is a point of authenticity.
- **Symposia:** Social gatherings in ancient Greece and Rome, typically involving drinking, dining, and convivial discussion, often with a more relaxed atmosphere regarding indulgence. Jude implies these practices might have been introduced into Christian "agape meals."

4) FAQs:

1. What are the primary challenges readers face when engaging with the Letter of Jude?

The Letter of Jude presents several difficulties for modern readers due to its brevity, limited to only 25 verses, which offers a narrow view into the lives of its original audience and the specific circumstances the author addresses. Its intense focus on judgment and condemnation, particularly against individuals accused of exploiting congregants for personal gain, clashes with contemporary values of tolerance and

pluralism. Furthermore, Jude's frequent and often obscure references to Old Testament episodes and extra-biblical texts necessitate a broad understanding of ancient Jewish literature for full comprehension. Lastly, the letter's historical reception has been "checkered," with divisions in the early church regarding its authority—largely due to its use of non-canonical texts—and even figures like Martin Luther questioning its value for inclusion in the New Testament.

2. What significant contributions does the Letter of Jude offer to Christian discipleship and ministry, despite its challenges?

Despite its challenging nature, the Letter of Jude offers three vital contributions. Firstly, it strongly reinforces the New Testament conviction that God's grace in Jesus Christ serves a transformative purpose: liberating believers from old desires and transforming them into a new self that can stand blameless before God. Any other response to grace, Jude argues, amounts to denying Christ and promoting self-indulgence. Secondly, Jude emphasizes accountability before God, particularly regarding ministerial integrity, prompting reflection on whether one serves God's purposes or personal interests in religious work. This serves as a reminder of ever-present dangers that can lead to scandal. Thirdly, the letter underscores mutual accountability within the Christian community, encouraging intervention to restore those straying from God's path and fostering humility in those who are the object of such interventions, a message that counteracts modern emphasis on radical self-determination.

3. Who is the likely author of the Letter of Jude, and what evidence supports this identification?

The author identifies himself as "Judas, Jude, a slave of Jesus Christ and a brother of James." This most clearly points to Judas, the half-brother of Jesus and brother of James (as mentioned in the Gospels). The identification with James, rather than a father, suggests James's prominence within their circles. James, the half-brother of Jesus, became a significant leader in the Jerusalem Church after Jesus's resurrection, appearing in key roles in Galatians 2, Acts 15, and Acts 21. While some modern scholarship, particularly since the 19th century, has questioned the letter's authenticity, arguing for a later author writing in Jude's name, the text itself does not exhibit the alleged signs of late 1st or early 2nd-century authorship (such as a waning expectation of Christ's return, appeals to church hierarchy, or a degenerated

use of "faith"). Instead, it shows a lively expectation of God's intervention and no mention of church offices.

4. What arguments have been raised against Jude's authorship, and how are they countered?

Arguments against Jude's authorship typically focus on three characteristics: a perceived waning expectation of Christ's return, appeals to church hierarchy, and a "degenerated" use of the word "faith." However, these arguments are countered because Jude actually displays a lively expectation of God's judgment and decisive intervention, with no suggestion of a delayed fulfillment. There are also no appeals to church hierarchy or mentions of church offices in the letter. Regarding the use of "faith," the argument that it degenerates from a dynamic relational term to a body of doctrines is problematic, as "the faith" was used to describe a set of convictions and a way of life very early in the Church, as seen in Galatians 1:23-24, long before the alleged late 1st/early 2nd century. Another objection concerns Jude's Greek proficiency, questioning if a Galilean craftsman's son could write such Greek. This is countered by acknowledging that Jude's profession is an assumption, and his experiences as a leader in multilingual Jerusalem and as a missionary (potentially in Greek-speaking areas like the Decapolis) would have necessitated and developed his Greek language skills. Furthermore, Jude could have used the help of other Greek-speaking Christians. Lastly, the idea that Jude 17-18 implies the apostles were dead is countered by a closer reading, which shows the audience is told to *remember what* the apostles said, not remember the apostles *as dead*. The verses instead presume the audience heard these words directly, placing them in the first generation of the Church.

5. What unique linguistic and traditional elements in Jude support its Palestinian Jewish origins and early date?

The Letter of Jude's rootedness in Palestinian Jewish traditions strongly supports its authenticity and an early date. The author's biblical phrases often reflect the Hebrew text of the Old Testament more closely than the Septuagint (the Greek translation widely used in the Eastern Mediterranean). For example, Jude 12's "waterless clouds being driven on by winds" and Jude 13's "wild waves of the sea, dredging up their degradation-like sea foam" align more with the Hebrew of Proverbs 25:14 and Isaiah 57:20, respectively, preserving vivid imagery that the Septuagint

versions omit or alter. Most strikingly, the author extensively uses First Enoch, a text composed and primarily read in Palestine and considered authoritative in Palestinian Jewish circles like the Qumran community. Jude also shows familiarity with extra-biblical traditions about figures like Cain, found in other Palestinian texts such as Aramaic targumim. These elements collectively suggest an author deeply embedded in Palestinian Jewish intellectual and religious currents.

6. What do we know about Jude's audience, and why might he have written to them in Greek?

Jude provides very little direct information about his audience, such as their location or ethnic background. However, the letter's content implies familiarity with Jewish traditions about figures like Cain, fallen angels, and Moses that are not found in canonical scriptures, as well as respect for First Enoch. This suggests the audience was largely composed of Greek-speaking Jewish Christians, though Gentile converts might also have been present. An audience in urban centers within Palestine (like Sepphoris, Tiberias, or coastal plains cities), where people were surrounded by and potentially tempted by Greek and non-Jewish lifestyle practices, would explain Jude writing in Greek rather than Aramaic. These urban areas would have been more susceptible to the kind of moral laxity Jude addresses, such as the introduction of Greek symposia elements into Christian love feasts.

7. What was the "specific problem and situation" that prompted Jude to write this letter?

Jude's letter was prompted by a very "specific problem and situation": the appearance of itinerant teachers from outside the congregation or group of congregations who had "wormed their way in." These individuals were "ungodly people transforming the grace of our God into shameless self-indulgence, and denying our only Lord and Master, Jesus Christ." Jude suggests they based their teaching and authority on "ecstasy-based revelation" or "dreaming," similar to spiritual gurus of the Greco-Roman world. While they presented themselves as teachers or spiritual leaders and likely self-identified as Christians (even participating in "love feasts"), their "ethical practice" was Jude's primary concern, not their doctrine. They were exploiting congregants for their own greed and self-centered desires, encouraging self-indulgent practices rather than adherence to God's purposes for grace, effectively using God's generosity for ends contrary to His

intentions. Jude perceives them as a "clear and present danger to the integrity of the faith."

8. How did the early church, and Jude in particular, address the challenge of false teachers and prophets?

The early church grappled with a "resurgence of prophecy" and charismatic gifts, making it crucial to "test what was spoken in the Spirit" to discern genuine messages from the Lord. Paul advised, "Do not despise prophecies, but test everything. Hold fast to what is good." Jesus himself warned against "false prophets" who appear as "ravenous wolves" but whose true nature is revealed by their "fruits" or results of their work. Jude's letter serves as another example of how congregations were guided to "discern the reliable teacher from the one who will lead them astray." He identifies the intruders by their ungodly behavior, their self-serving motives, and their perversion of God's grace into a license for self-indulgence. Much of his letter is dedicated to demonstrating, through historical examples from shared scriptures (like Cain, Balaam, Korah, fallen angels, Sodom, and the Exodus generation), that those who act like these interlopers face God's judgment and "come to a bad end." This emphasis on ethical conduct as a test for genuine teaching aligns with other early Christian responses to false teaching, such as those found in 1 John and the Didache, which emphasized both doctrinal and ethical tests.