



## **From Atheist to Theist (Part 36)**

Evidence for the Letter of Jude

By

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I'm answering a question often asked of me by atheists – What would move a strong **atheist** to become a strong **theist**? In my case the answer was **evidence** for theism, specifically for **Christian** theism.

I started sharing the evidence that can lead an atheist to theism and Christianity several years ago (click here to read the first article in this series). We've most recently been looking at evidence for the reliability of the New Testament writings.

So far we've looked at –

- The Gospel Accounts
- Paul's Writings
- James' Writing
- Peter's Writings
- John's Writings (1 John)
- John's Writings (2 and 3 John)
- John's Authorship of Revelation (Internal Evidence)

- John's Authorship of Revelation (External Evidence)

We move now to the evidence for **Jude** being the author of the Letter of Jude.

*[Just a reminder that we're only revealing the evidence available for investigation in early 1971. A future series will look at evidence that has been discovered since that time.]*

Here is a basic investigative process for determining ancient authorship:

- Internal evidence – what we find in the letter itself .. claim of authorship, historical information, geographical information, biographical information.
- Language and style – comparing writing style of other letters believed to have been written by same author (e.g. vocabulary, sentence structure, grammar, idioms).
- Content – comparing the content with other letters believed to have been written by same author (e.g. theology, historical data).
- External evidence – ancient writers supporting claim of authorship, ancient writers quoting from writings in question.

# Jude

## Internal Evidence

The beginning of the Letter of Jude identifies the author as “Jude, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James.” Several men in the New Testament were named Jude or Judas, so knowing that the person was the brother of James is helpful in determining which person may have authored the letter.

The author does not claim to be an apostle of Jesus Christ, which he most likely would have done if he held that position. Instead, he let the reader know he was the brother of James. That would seem to limit the author to the Jude (Judas) we read about in Matthew 13:55 and Mark 6:3. It’s interesting that the author used the name Jude rather than Judas in his greeting. That may have been so people would not confuse the letter as being from someone other than the brother of James (e.g. Judas son of James, Judas Barsabas). It’s also interesting to note that James, the half-brother of Jesus who

wrote the Letter of James, also did not refer to himself as an apostle (James 1:1).

The New Testament does not mention when Jude became a believer in Jesus Christ. John 7:5 reminds us that “even His brothers did not believe in Him.” Paul wrote that Jesus appeared to his half-brother James after His resurrection (1 Corinthians 15), but not that He appeared to His other half-brothers. It is most likely that Jesus did appear to all members of His earthly family after the resurrection. That may have occurred when He appeared to hundreds of followers in Galilee post-resurrection (e.g. Matthew 28:10, 16; 1 Corinthians 15:6). We know Jesus’ mother and brothers were meeting with the apostles in the upper room prior to Pentecost (Acts 1:14). It’s interesting to note that none of Jesus’ half-brothers, including Jude and James, were put forward as apostolic replacements for Judas Iscariot. That’s because they did not fulfill the criteria for becoming an apostle (Acts 1:21-26).

Jude wrote to “those who are called, sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ.” However, he did not mention where the letter’s recipients lived. Some scholars believe Jude wrote to Jewish believers based on his quotation from *1 Enoch* and an allusion to *The Assumption of Moses*.

Because of some similarities between Jude and 2 Peter, some scholars believe Jude may have borrowed from Peter or Peter from Jude. Jude did not mention the destruction of Jerusalem, which was his home base, so the letter was probably written before 70 AD. It would seem more likely that Jude would have written his letter after Peter wrote his. One clue is something Jude mentioned in his letter. Notice how Jude referred to words spoken before by the apostles of Jesus, then wrote something very similar to what Peter wrote in his second letter –

*“But you, beloved, remember the words which were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ: how they told you that there would be mockers in the last time who would walk according to their own ungodly lusts. These are sensual persons, who cause divisions, not having the Spirit.”*

### **JUDE 1:17-19**

*“But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber.”*

### **2 PETER 2:1-3**

Jude, and Peter in his second letter, spent a great deal of time addressing the problem of false teachers. Both men also addressed the angels who had sinned, God's destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and people who despised and rejected authority –

*“And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day; as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. Likewise also these dreamers defile the flesh, reject authority, and speak evil of dignitaries.”*

### **JUDE 1:6-8**

*“For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment; and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the*

*world of the ungodly; and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly; and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds)— then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment, and especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority. They are presumptuous, self-willed. They are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries, whereas angels, who are greater in power and might, do not bring a reviling accusation against them before the Lord.”*

## **2 PETER 2:4-11**

They both referred to the false teachers as being like “brute beasts” and “spots” at church love feasts –

*“But these speak evil of whatever they do not know; and whatever they know naturally, like brute beasts, in these things they corrupt themselves ... These are spots in your love feasts, while they feast with you without fear, serving only themselves. ”*

**JUDE 1:10, 12A**

*“But these, like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed, speak evil of the things they do not understand, and will utterly perish in their own corruption, and will receive the wages of unrighteousness, as those who count it pleasure to carouse in the daytime. They are spots and blemishes, carousing in their own deceptions while they feast with you.”*

**2 PETER 2:12-13**

Jude and Peter referred to the false brethren as appearing to bring life-giving water, when in fact they were empty vessels

–

*“They are clouds without water, carried about by the winds; late autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, pulled up by the roots; raging waves of the sea, foaming up their own shame; wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.”*

**JUDGE 1:12B-13**

*“These are wells without water, clouds carried by a tempest, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.”*

**2 PETER 2:17**

Two more examples of the similarity between Jude and 2 Peter are –

*“These are grumblers, complainers, walking according to their own lusts; and they mouth great swelling words, flattering people to gain advantage.”*

**JUDE 1:16**

*“For when they speak great swelling words of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage.”*

**2 PETER 2:18-19**

*“But you, beloved, remember the words which were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ: how they told you that there would be mockers in the last time who would walk according to their own ungodly lusts. These are sensual persons, who cause divisions, not having the Spirit.”*

**JUDE 1:17-19**

*Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder), that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior, knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts.”*

**2 PETER 3:1-3**

It is possible that the men wrote independently of each other, given that Scripture is inspired by God (2 Timothy 3:16). God may have inspired Jude to present similar content to a different audience or to support what Peter had written.

## External Evidence

Several early Church Fathers may have referenced the Letter of Jude in their writings (e.g. Clement of Rome, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Origen). The Letter of Jude was included as authentic in the Muratorian Canon (latter part of the 2nd century AD). Athanasius accepted Jude, as did the Council of Carthage (4th century AD). Church historian Eusebius (3rd and 4th centuries) listed Jude among some of the 'questioned' books of the New Testament, but did write that many considered Jude to be authentic.

# Atheist Conclusion

I had my doubts about the authenticity of Jude during my investigation of the New Testament because some of the early leaders of Christianity had their doubts. I now believe Jude was authentic, but we're looking at my conclusions as an atheist before I became a Christian.

## Next Time

We will look at evidence for Luke's authorship of the Book of Acts in the next part of our special series, *Convince Me There's A God: The New Testament*.

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