



Week 53

Jude

Background

Author: Jude, half-brother of Jesus, and brother James (who led the church in Jerusalem).

Date: Range of dates suggested between AD40 and AD90 – probably around AD 66.

Written for: local churches, like the letters of James and Peter, Jude is an encyclical letter – intended to be circulated and read in all churches rather than one specific church.

Purpose: To encourage Christians to stand firm in their faith and to alert them to the dangers of the doctrine and lifestyle of false teachers.

Style: A very rushed style with plenty of passion. Jude does not pull any punches in delivering his message. However the doxology at the end is beautifully phrased.

NB: There are many similarities between this book and 2 Peter.

Some points of interest:

The greeting "Mercy, peace and Love be yours in abundance" (verse 2) sounds similar to those in other books such as 2 Peter, Philemon, Titus etc. However, it is the only one that does not contain "Grace" and the only one that does include "Love". Not sure of the significance but interesting nevertheless.

One of the reasons some people struggle with Jude is because of the reference to Enoch. Now the book of Enoch is accepted writing but it is not in the Canon. Some people argue that Jude should therefore be excluded from canon as he quotes from non-canonical book (Also refers to the story of the Angel Michael burying the body of Moses). Needless to say others disagree. It is important to note that although Jude quotes from Enoch he does not call it "scripture".

Then we come to the last two verses, which form a beautiful doxology (a short hymn of praise).

"To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy – to the only God our Saviour be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and for evermore! Amen." (Jude 24, 25 NIV)



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And what is the relevance for today?

Mercy

Mercy – Compassion or forgiveness shown towards an enemy or offender in one's power. (O.E.D.)

Mercy – when you don't get the punishment you deserve. (Someone on the internet)

After the basic introductions Jude's letter really begins with "Mercy, Peace and Love be yours in abundance". Mercy leading the way.

Then towards the end, verse 21, we have "Keep yourselves in God's love as we wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life."

Jude is quite clear what punishment awaits the false teachers – "the punishment of eternal fire" (verse 7). So often the Christian message we deliver today concentrates on the "nice" bits – God loves us, we should love one another, etc.

However we know our sins are forgiven but we must not use this as an excuse to sin – "a licence for immorality" (verse 4). We must remember that God loves us but also that we will be judged (think about the goats and sheep etc).

We are told to "...build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit. Keep yourselves in God's love..."

However Jude also tells us to

"Be merciful to those who doubt, snatch others from the fire and save them; to others show mercy, mixed with fear – hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh." (Jude 22,23 NIV)

There is a seriousness and an urgency in these words which I think we often ignore. Is this how you view your friends and family? What does it actually mean in practice?

"To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy – to the only God our Saviour be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and for evermore! Amen." (Jude 24, 25 NIV)