

Text: Jude 1-4

Tonight, we will start working through the body of Jude. I want to change a bit from the straight preaching approach to more of a Bible study approach. Your handout has a much briefer outline. We will use it to suggest things to talk about, but I want to have more audience participation in our session tonight than we've had in the past.

Jude is a very important little book, especially for those who hold to the fundamentals of the faith and are willing to stand up for them.

The opening passage sounds the theme, and that is what we will look at tonight:

Called to Contend

Read Jude 1-4

I. Observations from the opening (1-2)

A. Jude, the bond-servant

1. Humility

"he preferred to describe his relationship with Jesus as spiritual rather than physical (cf. James 1:1)."¹

2. Submission

Bond-servant = *doulos*, slave

B. The recipients and the blessing (1b-2)

1. Notice the "three-fold description" (1b)

2. Compare the "three-fold blessing" (2)

"Jude's threefold description of his readers is the first of many triads that distinguish the style of this letter. These triads present an impression of completeness and well-rounded thought. The Holy Spirit called Christians in the past (cf. v. 3),

¹ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Jude 1.

God the Father loves them in the present (cf. v. 21), and the Son will keep them secure for the future (cf. vv. 14, 21, 24)."²

II. Change of purpose: the preference vs. the compulsion (3)

A. Jude would rather write about our common salvation

1. Positives are always easier than negatives
2. Yet in submission to the Holy Spirit, he felt a necessity (compulsion)

Testimony to the nature of inspiration

B. Contrast “the common salvation” with “the faith”

1. The subject is the essentially same
2. The purpose is different: exposition vs. exhortation

C. Understanding the “appeal to contend”

“To contend earnestly for’ (*epagōnizesthai*) translates an expressive compound verbal term which appears only here in the New Testament. The simple form of the verb (*agōnizomai*), which appears as ‘agonize’ in its English dress, was much used in connection with athletic contests to describe a strenuous struggle to overcome an opponent, as in a wrestling match. A more general use was in reference to any conflict, contest, debate, or lawsuit. It involves the thought of the expenditure of all one’s energy in order to prevail.”³

D. Understanding the object for which we must contend

1. “the faith” — (recall “our common salvation”)
2. “once for all handed down”
 - a. Unalterable
 - b. Normative
 - c. Complete [no additions]

² Constable, Jud 1.

³ D. Edmond Hiebert, *Second Peter and Jude: An Expositional Commentary* (Greenville, S.C: Bob Jones University Press, 1989), 218.

Compare Rev 22.18-19

Rev 22.18-19 ¶ I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book;¹⁹ and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book.

3. The use of this appeal in forming the canon
 - a. Apostolic source: key test
 - b. Concept of completion — no ongoing revelation

III. Rationale: the rise of interlopers (4)

A. The rise of interlopers (false teachers)

1. They “crept in unnoticed”

John wrote that many antichrists had gone out (1Jn 2.18-19); Jude speaks of those who crept in.

“wormed their way in” (NEB)⁴

2. Their character: deceptive, surreptitious
 - a. Obscures detection
 - b. Encourages defection (by saints who aren’t vigilant)
3. Marked beforehand for condemnation
 - a. Some ambiguity in the phrase
 - b. “This condemnation” usually points back, here I think it points forward to the subsequent condemnation Jude gives
 - c. Marked beforehand: God is predetermined to judge characters such as these
 - 1) They are no surprise to God
 - 2) God has plans for them

⁴ Constable, *Expository Notes*, Jud 4.

B. The character of the interlopers

1. Ungodly persons
2. Morally corrupt
3. Deny Jesus Christ
 - a. Note: they deny “our Lord Jesus”
 - b. Not: they deny “their Lord Jesus”
 - c. Denial can be by conduct as well as by word

Conclusion:

We have a duty of vigilance for the essentials of the faith. As we get to the end of the book, we will see some specifics about how to go about this.

Nevertheless, at the outset, we are setting out a mindset or attitude of vigilance. There are individuals who will arise in churches and institutions, intending to tear down Christianity itself, if they can.