

Article of the Month – January 2014

Missiological Observations in the NT (19) – Jude

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Jude's letter, the last of the General Epistles, shows much commonality with Peter's 2nd letter. Both address false teachers. Peter warns that they are coming – he speaks in the future tense.¹ Jude says that they are already among the people.² This suggests that Jude wrote later than Peter, or that both made use of a tract against false teachers that may have been written by someone else. It is impossible to have certainty about this but there is no reason to doubt the authenticity of either letter.

Jude combats an early form of Gnosticism. Green gives these characteristics:³ Gnostics denied the Lordship of Christ, minimized the law and advertised freedom, they emphasized special knowledge, were arrogant and cynical towards 'unenlightened' church leaders and felt superior to people with less knowledge or revelation; they displayed an unhealthy interest in angelology,⁴ created divisiveness, advocated lasciviousness and perverted God's grace into licentiousness: the true 'pneumatic', they said, could not be affected by what the flesh does, in other words: feel free to continue sinning; they felt no duty to obey civil or ecclesiastical authorities, taught that their salvation was already complete and had no eschatological expectation of ultimate redemption. Similar heresies, like those of the Nicolaitans,⁵ were found in the Asian churches.

Of Jude's 25 verses, 15 run parallel with 2 Peter and only v. 1-3 and 19-25 differ. Jude 4-18 has many similarities with 2 Peter 2:1-19. Peter is more elaborate in his arguments and uses no extra-canonical data, whereas Jude is briefer and allegedly quotes from the Apocrypha.⁶

Jude's place in the New Testament, just prior to Revelation, is significant. In the Last Days there will be an increase of false teaching⁷ as well as deception among and falling away of saints.⁸ Jude warns of events that reach their climax in the book of Revelation and are already of great relevance today.

He had wanted to write about something else⁹ but felt he should rather address this false teaching. Sometimes missionaries need to change their approaches, plans, teachings and sermons in order to stay relevant for their people with regard to their felt needs. Disciples are not trained appropriately by teachers who ride theological hobbyhorses.

¹ 2 Peter 2:1-3

² Jude:4

³ Green, M, 2 Peter and Jude – An Introduction and Commentary, Leicester: Intervarsity, 1970:39

⁴ The teaching about angels

⁵ Rev. 2 & 3

⁶ Green states that Jude:9 quotes from the 'Assumption of Moses' and v. 14 from the 'Book of Enoch' (Green, 1970:48-50). Others dispute this fervently (see e.g.

[The%20Apocryphal%20Books%20The%20Assumption%20of%20Moses%20and%201%20Enoch_files/The%200Apocryphal%20Books%20The%20Assumption%20of%20Moses%20and%201%20Enoch.htm](#)

⁷ 1 Tim. 4:1-3a

⁸ Matt. 24:4,5,10,11; 2 Thess. 2:1-12

⁹ Jude:3a

Disciples must learn to contend for their faith.¹⁰ There is a battle in the heavenly places,¹¹ expressing itself also in the presence of false teachers. It takes spiritual warfare to resist their influence. A soft, pie-in-the-sky, cloud-nine faith will be overrun by spiritual enemy troops and their human agents. Contending for the faith demands the following weapons: discernment of spirits, prayer, intercession, thorough knowledge of God's Word, maintaining a holy life-style and courageously speaking up against sin and evil.

Jude says 'build yourselves up in ... faith',¹² not 'wait until you are visited to be built up'. He promotes spiritual self-reliance: watch over *your own* spiritual life.

'Snatch others ... and save them',¹³ refers to the desire to reach out and save the lost. This should be a heart attitude of all church members, whether they are involved in local evangelism or cross-cultural missions. Saving others should not be the occupation of *a few* but the habit *of all*.

The salvation of people will culminate in their presence with the Lord 'without fault'.¹⁴ People who have been brought back into a right relationship with God will joyfully praise Him¹⁵ because that is what they were created for.¹⁶ They have 'come home' and were saved in order to respond to God's purpose for them. We see then that the final result of evangelism and missions is the glorification of God, as Jude rightfully concludes.¹⁷

¹⁰ :3b

¹¹ Eph. 6:10-20

¹² Jude:20,21

¹³ :23

¹⁴ :24; 1 Thess. 5:23,24

¹⁵ Jude:25

¹⁶ Rev. 4:11

¹⁷ Jude:25