

# Who was Jude in the Bible?

There were several men named Jude, or Judas, in the New Testament. Jude is a derivative of the names Judas and Judah, much as the nickname Sam is a derivative of the name Samuel. But three men named Jude (Judas) had significant roles in Jesus' day:

1. Judas Iscariot, who betrayed our Lord for thirty pieces of silver, was a chosen disciple who later hanged himself (Luke 6:16; Matthew 27:4-5).

2. Judas the apostle is identified in the gospels as "not Iscariot." So Jesus chose two men by the name of Jude (or Judas) to be among the twelve disciples (John 14:22; Acts 1:13).

3. Jude was a half-brother of Jesus and brother of James, leader of the first Jerusalem church. This Jude was the son of Mary and Joseph and would have been raised as a brother to Jesus Christ (Mark 6:3). This Jude is the author of the New Testament book by that name. In Jude 1:1, he identifies himself as "a servant of Jesus Christ and a brother of James." It is interesting that neither he nor his brother, James, claimed familial relationship with Jesus when they penned their letters. Pride would have nudged them to include that fact, but reverence and an understanding of Jesus' divine identity motivated them to consider themselves as only His servants.

Jude was among the siblings of Jesus who, at first, did not believe His claims to be the Messiah (John 7:3-5). At one point, they along with Mary waited outside the place where Jesus was teaching in order to bring Him home with them (Matthew 12:46-47). Their purpose was "to take charge of him, for they said, 'He is out of his mind'" (Mark 3:21). It was most likely after the resurrection that Jude and his brother James came to

understand that their half-brother, Jesus, was indeed the Son of God. It was that shift in perspective that motivated Jude to define himself not as “the brother of the Messiah” but as “a servant of Jesus Christ” (Jude 1:1).

Although not one of the twelve apostles, Jude was a leader in the early church. He begins his letter with a deep concern about believers abandoning the faith and turning to false teachers (Jude 1:3-4). His manner of addressing “those who are called, loved by God the Father, and kept in Jesus Christ” is kind and loving. Yet he is direct and unapologetic in addressing the wickedness of false teachers (Jude 1:12-13). He speaks easily of Jesus, as one who knew Him intimately. It is also noteworthy that Jude credits the Lord Jesus with saving His people from Egypt (Jude 1:5), although at the time of the exodus Jesus had not yet been revealed. It may have been that after his conversion Jude recalled the stories and claims of his older brother during their growing-up years that he had discounted at the time. As the eyes of his heart were opened (see Ephesians 1:18), Jude began to see Jesus in a completely different light and had insights and knowledge not available to everyone else.

Jude and his brother James also teach us that familiarity with Jesus is not sufficient to save us. They lived in the same household with the Son of God for years, yet they did not believe in Him. They knew about Him, but they did not know Him. The same is true for many professing Christians today. Cultural Christianity places people in proximity to the truth, but many have not allowed that truth to redefine their lives. Jesus said, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really know me, you will know my Father as well” (John 14:6-7). There were no shortcuts for Jude, James, or Mary. Living in the household with the Son of God could not save them. They had to be saved by grace through faith just like everyone else who

wants to know God (Ephesians 2:8-9).