

THE LETTER OF JUDE

Address

Ac 12:17+ From Jude, servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James; to those who are 1
called, to those who are dear to^a God the Father and kept safe for Jesus Christ,
2 P 1:2 wishing you all mercy and peace and love. 2

The reason for this letter

My dear friends, at a time when I was eagerly looking forward to writing to 3
you about the salvation that we all share,^b I have been forced^c to write to you
Ac 9:13+ now and appeal to you to fight hard for the faith which has been once and for all
||2 P 2:1 entrusted to the saints. •Certain people have infiltrated among you, and they 4
are the ones you had a warning about, in writing, long ago, when they were
Ga 5:13 condemned^d for denying all religion, turning the grace of our God into immorality,
1 P 2:16 and rejecting our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.^e
1 Jn 4:1
2 Jn 10

The false teachers: the certainty of their punishment

1 Co 6:3 I should like to remind you—though you have already learnt it once and for 5
||2 P 1:12 all^f—how the Lord^g rescued the nation from Egypt, but afterwards he still
Nb 14:26-35 destroyed the men who did not trust him. •Next let me remind you of the angels 6
1 Co 10:5 who had supreme authority but did not keep it and left their appointed sphere;^h
||2 P 2:4 he has kept them down in the dark, in spiritual chains, to be judged on the great
Gn 6:1-2 day. •The fornication of Sodom and Gomorrah and the other nearby towns was 7
Gn 19
2 P 2: 6-9 equally unnatural,ⁱ and it is a warning to us that they are paying for their crimes
Mt 10:15p in eternal fire.

Their violent language

||2 P 2:10-12 Nevertheless, these people^j are doing the same: in their delusions they not 8
only defile their bodies and disregard authority,^k but abuse the glorious angels
Dt 34:6+ as well. •Not even the archangel Michael, when he was engaged in argument 9
Nb 10:13+ with the devil about the corpse of Moses,^l dared to denounce him in the language
Zc 3:2+ of abuse; all he said was, 'Let the Lord correct you'. •But these people abuse 10
anything they do not understand; and the only things they do understand—just
by nature^m like unreasoning animals—will turn out to be fatal to them.

Their vicious behaviour

Gn 4:8 May they get what they deserve, because they have followed Cain; they have 11
||2 P 2:15 rushed to make the same mistake as Balaam and for the same reward; they have
1 Jn 3:12 rebelled just as Korah did—and share the same fate. •They are a dangerous 12
Nb 22:2+ Rv 2:14 obstacleⁿ to your community meals, coming for the food and quite shamelessly
Nb 16 only looking after themselves. They are like clouds blown about by the winds and
Pr 25:14 bringing no rain, or like barren trees which are then uprooted in the winter and so
||2 P 2:13,
17-18

- 13 are twice dead; •like wild sea waves capped with shame as if with foam; or like Is 57:20
 14 shooting stars^o bound for an eternity of black darkness. •It was with them in
 mind that Enoch, the seventh patriarch from Adam, made his prophecy when he
 said, 'I tell you, the Lord will come with his saints in their tens of thousands, Dn 7:10
 Rv 5:11
 15 to pronounce judgement on all mankind and to sentence the wicked for all the
 wicked things they have done, and for all the defiant things said against him by
 16 irreligious sinners'.^p •They are mischief-makers, grumblers governed only by ||2 P 2:18
 their own desires,^q with *mouths full of boastful talk*, ready with flattery for other Dn 7:8,20
 people when they see some advantage in it. Lv 19:15

A warning

- 17 But remember, my dear friends, what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ ||2 P 3:2-3
 18 told you to expect. •'At the end of time,' they told you 'there are going to be I Tm 4:1+
 people who sneer at religion and follow nothing but their own desires for
 19 wickedness.' •These unspiritual and selfish people are nothing but mischief- I Co 15:44+
 makers.'

The duties of love

- 20 But you, my dear friends, must use your most holy faith as your foundation I Co 3:9-17
 21 and build on that, praying in the Holy Spirit; •keep yourselves within the love Ep 2:20-22
 of God and wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to give you eternal life.
 22 When there are some who have doubts, reassure them; •when there are some
 23 to be saved from the fire, pull them out; but there are others^r to whom you must
 be kind with great caution, keeping your distance even from outside clothing
 which is contaminated by vice.

Doxology

- 24 Glory be to him who can keep you from falling and bring you safe to his ||2 P 3:14
 25 glorious presence, innocent and happy.' •To God, the only God, who saves us
 through Jesus Christ our Lord, be the glory, majesty, authority and power, which
 he had before time began, now and for ever. Amen. Rm 16:25-27+
 Rv 5:13

a. 'To those who are', var. 'to the nations who are'.
 'dear to'; var. 'made holy by'.

b. 'the salvation that we all share': Vulg. 'your salvation'.

c. By the danger these heretics represent.

d. Lit. 'For certain men crept in who long ago have been written beforehand for this judgement'; var. 'for this sin'.

e. Var. 'relecting God, the only Master and our Lord Jesus Christ'.

f. The faith entrusted 'once and for all', v. 3, to the saints must never be changed.

g. God the Father, cf. 2 P 2:4. Var. (Vulg.) 'Jesus', i.e. a reference to Christ in his divine pre-existence, cf. 1 Co 10:4.

h. They let themselves be seduced by the 'daughters of men', Gn 6:1-2; the subject is elaborated in the *Book of Enoch*.

i. Lit. 'Like Sodom... in the same way fornicating and going after alien flesh'. They lusted not after human beings, but after the strangers who were angels, Gn 19:1-11. The apocryphal *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*, like Jude 6-7, also compares the sin of the angels with the sin of the Sodomites.

j. The heretics living at the same time as Jude. Om. (Vulg.) 'in their delusions'.

k. 'disregard authority', lit. 'despise sovereignty'; var. 'sovereignties', i.e. the angels, cf. Ep 1:21; Col 1:16.

l. Almost certainly a reference to the apocryphal *Assumption of Moses*.

m. Their lack of knowledge results from the fact that they do not possess the Spirit, they know nothing except what they have learnt through their unaided natural powers.

n. Lit. 'They are reefs to your agapēs' (cf. 1 Co 11:20+). 'reefs': var. (Vulg.) 'blots', 'agapēs': var. 'deceits', cf. 2 P 2:13. These heretics were still taking part in the life of the Church; all that had happened to them so far was that they had been noticed.

o. In Jewish apocrypha, e.g. the *Book of Enoch*, 'stars' often stand for 'angels'.

p. *Enoch* 1:9, probably quoted from memory.

q. Suggested by *Enoch* 5:5.

r. Lit. 'There are the ones who make divisions (Vulg. 'who separate themselves', i.e. from the Church), *psychikoi* not having the Spirit'. The heretics are like 'animals' because they act irrationally or on impulse, v. 10; the central human quality they lack is openness to the Spirit, cf. Rm 1:9+.

s. 'When there are some who have doubts, be kind to them, save them, pull them out of the fire; but there are others...'

t. Vulg. adds 'at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ'.

THE BOOK OF
REVELATION

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF REVELATION

The Greek title of this book is 'Apocalypse of John', and the word 'apocalypse' is a transliteration of the Greek word for revelation: any writing under this title claims to include a revelation of hidden things, imparted by God, and particularly a revelation of events hidden in the future. It is not easy to draw an exact dividing line between prophecy and apocalypse, and the writers of apocalyptic are in some ways the successors of the prophets; but we can at least make the distinction that the Old Testament prophets characteristically received the message by 'hearing the word of God' and passed it on by word of mouth, whereas the author of a written apocalypse was given his revelation in a vision and passed it on in writing.

The language of apocalyptic writing is richly symbolic, and the importance of the visions which are described is never in their immediate literal meaning. It can be taken as a rule that every element in this kind of writing has symbolic value—persons, places, animals, actions, objects, parts of the body, numbers and measurements, stars, constellations, colours and garments—and if we are not to misunderstand or distort the writer's message, we must appreciate the imagery at its true value and do our best to translate the symbols back into the ideas which he intended them to convey. There are parts of the text in which this will involve our distinguishing a direct allegorical interpretation of the images that are used. There are other parts, however, in which no single interpretation can be confidently adopted, since a single group of images will be found to draw its meaning from various different associations.

Apocalyptic writing became very popular in some Jewish circles (including the Essenes of Qumran) in the two centuries before Christ. The visions of prophets like Ezekiel and Zechariah paved the way, and apocalypse as a literary form was already fully developed by the time of Daniel and in the many apocryphal writings about the beginning of the Christian era. The New Testament includes only one apocalypse; its author says he was called John, 1:9, and that at the time of writing he was an exile for his Christian faith on the island of Patmos. A tradition as early as Justin and widespread by the end of the 2nd century (Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, the Canon of Muratori) identified this John with the apostle, author of the fourth gospel. On the other hand, it is almost certain that the churches of Syria, Cappadocia and even Palestine did not include the Revelation in the canon of scripture until the 5th century; evidently they did not believe it to be the work of an apostle. At the beginning of the 3rd century a priest of Rome, Caius by name, attributed it to Cerinthus the heretic, though this may have been merely an attempt to justify his attack on it. Internal evidence shows that the Revelation of John has