

NEW TESTAMENT POSTCARDS

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTATES

JUDE 1-4



The Heart of the Matter

Except for its resounding, magnificent doxology, the “postcard” of Jude is a little-known piece of New Testament literature. Those few who attempt to read and understand this book often feel puzzled and confused. Admittedly, its language and word pictures seem curiously foreign to our ears. But the first time it was read by its original audience, it probably struck like a hammer-blow on their hearts. Jude’s letter condemned the acts of those who opposed the faith and warned the faithful believers to stay strong in the midst of moral and spiritual chaos. When properly interpreted and applied, this postcard still has the same impact today. This single-chapter letter may provide the most dramatic depiction and denunciation of heresy in the entire Bible. It calls Christians to prepare for battle—to equip our hearts and minds with a deep knowledge of and commitment to the truth.



Discovering the Way

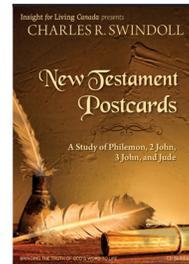
1. Introductory Facts to Remember

Before we study Jude’s postcard, we must learn about the writer, the recipients, and the theme.

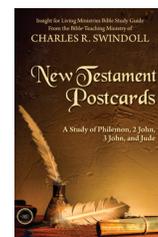
- **The Writer:** Jude, the brother of James and half-brother of Jesus, wrote this letter.
- **The Recipients:** Jude addressed his letter to Christians and probably intended the letter to be passed from church to church.
- **The Theme:** Jude recognized that heretical, immoral teachers had infiltrated the young church. So Jude wrote this postcard to prepare Christians to “contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints” (Jude 3).



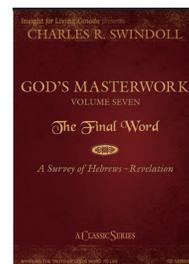
Tools for Digging Deeper



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2. Probing Questions to Answer

Let's answer three questions about Jude's letter:

- **Why did Jude change his purpose?** While Jude wanted to encourage Christians by highlighting their salvation through Christ, Jude switched his focus because false teachers had infiltrated the church. Jude wrote his letter to prepare believers for battle (Jude 3).
- **What characterized the apostates?** Jude gave his readers several ways to recognize apostates and false teachers: they turned the grace of God into a license to sin and they rejected the deity of Jesus Christ and His authority to rule over them (verse 4).
- **How did Jude develop his theme?** In Jude 5–16, Jude called Christians to contend for the faith, and he exposed the beliefs and behaviors of the apostates. In Jude 17–23, Jude explained how Christians can fulfill their responsibility and carry out this important task.



GETTING TO THE ROOT

*Agonize for the Faith*¹

The word for *contend* in Jude 3, *epagonizomai*, means “to exert intense effort on behalf of something.”² If you look closely at this Greek word, you'll see the root from which we get our English word *agonize*. The Greek word often referred to the struggle between two athletes who sought the same prize. Jude pled with Christians to struggle and expend themselves as they defended doctrinal truth.

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Starting Your Journey

In this lesson we have discovered the need to be equipped to stand firm against false teaching. Christians must develop the discernment to distinguish between doctrinal truth and error. As Christians, we must strengthen our knowledge through personal study. It won't always be easy, but in a time when error is flaunted as fact, we must diligently follow the way of truth.

Do you know the central tenets of the faith? How can you grow in your knowledge of the doctrines Jesus and His apostles taught?

ENDNOTES

1. Adapted from Insight for Living, *The Way of Truth in a World of Fiction: Beyond The Da Vinci Code* (Plano, Tex.: IFL Publishing House, 2006), 22.
2. Frederick William Danker, ed., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 356.