

NEW TESTAMENT POSTCARDS

WHY BOTHER TO BATTLE?

JUDE 5-16



The Heart of the Matter

When a man named Jude sat down one day in the first century to record some thoughts about the Christian life, he suddenly changed his mind. Instead of presenting a calm, calculated explanation of our walk with Christ, he unloaded a blistering exposé of apostasy, exhorting his readers to “contend earnestly for the faith” (Jude 3). Because God led Jude to change his message, today we have this postcard of helpful guidelines on how to stand firm against the tempting trends of our times. Unlike many today who tolerate heresy to keep the peace, Jude demonstrated clearly that the battle for truth demands our effort.



Discovering the Way

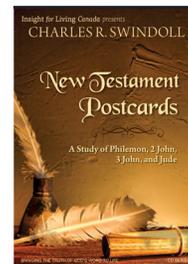
1. A Brief Review (Jude 1-4)

The particular invaders who incited Jude’s anger were twisting grace into a license to sin as well as denying the person and work of Christ. This description matches a group of heresies that eventually became known as Gnosticism. Gnostics blended Christianity with Greek philosophy, Middle Eastern religions, and even Jewish mysticism. Fundamentally, they taught that our physical body is evil and our spirit is good. This led Gnostics to one of two extremes: asceticism and the denial of all bodily pleasures or immorality and the casting off of all restraints.

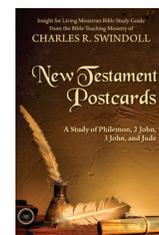
Apparently, false teachers who lived in wickedness had infiltrated the church, claiming that their righteousness in Christ freed them to do as they pleased. They also taught strange doctrines about Christ, denying His humanity and assuming that He had merely a ghost-like appearance.



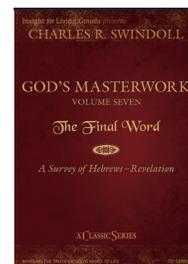
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2. A Bold Reminder (Jude 5–16)

Believers in the true Christ who study true Scripture and fellowship in a true church already have the infallible sources of true knowledge and wisdom. Knowing this, Jude provided four essential reasons to join in the fight for the true faith.

- First, we know that heretics face certain doom.
- Second, false teachers blaspheme.
- Third, the religion of the apostates is empty.
- Fourth, heretics live godless lives and seek to spread their evil ways among others.



DOORWAY TO HISTORY

*Early Contenders*¹

Those who earnestly contend for the faith today stand in a long line of saints who have fought for the central truths of Christianity against false teachers and bloodthirsty tyrants.

Ignatius of Antioch (*martyred c. AD 110*) While on his way to martyrdom in Rome, Ignatius wrote seven letters to various churches. He challenged the false teachings of the Judaizers who denied grace and docetists who denied the incarnation of Christ. He called for unity in the church around the doctrine of Christ and the essentials of the gospel.

Polycarp of Smyrna (*martyred c. AD 155*) A friend of Ignatius and student of the apostle John, Polycarp was a long-time pastor of Smyrna. He battled heretics and advanced the gospel of Christ, eventually suffering martyrdom in his eighties.

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Justin Martyr (*martyred c. AD 165*) Justin was a convert to Christianity from Greek philosophy. He wrote several defenses of Christianity against both pagans and Jews, and he combated Gnostics and other false religions. As his name indicates, Justin was ultimately martyred for his faith at the hands of the Romans.

Irenaeus of Lyons (*martyred c. AD 200*) Originally from Asia Minor, Irenaeus was a disciple of Polycarp. Irenaeus lived in Rome before serving as a pastor in Lyons (modern-day France). There he wrote the massive, five-book *Against All Heresies*, in which he demonstrated the true Christian faith and identified the errors of the heretical groups of his day, especially the Gnostics.



Starting Your Journey

Jude wanted to instill in his audience a sense of righteous anger against the apostates. But if we're not careful, righteous indignation can boil over into uncontrolled hostility. We must prepare ourselves to stand up for truth and rely on the Holy Spirit to help us exercise control.

Do you know where you stand doctrinally? Are you ready to challenge the apostates you will come in contact with?

ENDNOTE

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), 43-44.