

JUDE – PRESERVING & MAINTAINING OUR FAITH

The Book of Jude was named for its author, Jude. Who was Jude? What do we know about him? Not a whole lot. Most notably he was the half-brother of Jesus (same mother but different fathers). Jude says that he is the brother of James (who was a leader in the Jerusalem church and who wrote the Book of James). From Matthew 13 we know that Jude and James had two other brothers named Joseph and Simon and at least 2 sisters. So contrary to what the Catholics claim, Mary did not remain a virgin after she conceived and bore Jesus but had several children including Jude. We also know that during Jesus' ministry Jude was not a follower of Jesus. In fact Mark 3 tells us that he and his brothers thought that Jesus was "out of his mind." John 7 says, "For not even [Jesus'] brothers believed in Him." 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 as He had claimed. So neither Jude nor his brother, James are "apostles." However, both of them are highly respected in the early church.

Why did Jude write this letter? What is the situation? Well, in the late First Century when most of the books at the end of the N.T. were written – Hebrews, First, Second and Third John, Jude and Revelation – when these books were written Christianity was about 60 years old. So when Jude writes this letter it has been 60 years since Jesus established His church and was crucified and resurrected and ascended back to the Father. A lot has happened in those 60 years. Persecution throughout the Roman Empire has ramped up. The early Christian converts that we see in the Book of Acts are forced to leave Jerusalem and they scatter. Thru their faithful witness, carrying the Gospel message wherever they went, the Christian faith spread. Most of the apostles became missionaries in various places. Christianity went from being about 500 people (1 Cor 15:6) to by now tens of thousands. Christian house churches have sprung up literally everywhere in the Roman Empire despite persecution. So early on in the history of the church the disciples and their converts have faithfully carried

out the Great Commission (Jesus' mandate in Matt 28 to go and make disciples of all nations). That's a good thing. But during these 60 years what has also happened is that the original disciples, the apostles, have pretty much all died out. Only John remains but he is now in his 90s. Almost all of the apostles including Paul ended up being martyred. Many of the "second generation" disciples – Timothy, Barnabas, Titus, John Mark, Priscilla and Aquila, Apollos and the scores of people Paul names at the end of his letters, they are well up in years themselves. The N.T as we know it is in the process of being written and compiled and even some of the letters distributed and read in the churches. But it will be another 200 years or so before the N.T. canon gets fully agreed upon by the church. And it won't be until after the printing press is invented in 1456 that people can access their own Bibles. So the average Christian living during the period of time that Jude is writing does not have a Bible. They depend entirely on the preaching and teaching they get in the community of believers each week.

You can see just how easy it would be for false teaching to take hold and spread. And it did! This was a huge problem in the early church. All four of these ARE certainly issues that the church has to deal with, but the issue of **false teachers** is what Jude focuses his attention on. So this is the reality that exists in the Jude's day and if you know anything about church history, this issue never really goes away.

READ Jude 1-2

To show you Jude's humility, he does not claim to be the brother of Jesus. He prefers to identify himself as "a servant (some translations say "slave") of Jesus Christ."

We don't know for sure who Jude's intended audience is. But they are definitely believers. In v 1 Jude refers to them as "called, beloved in God... kept for Jesus Christ..." Based on the illustrations that he gives in this letter they were most likely believers that came out of a Jewish context. But we

don't for sure where they lived. Jude gives a traditional greeting as he opens his letter, almost identical to the greeting Peter gives in 1 & 2 Peter.

READ Jude 3

Jude apparently set out to write a write a positive letter about salvation. But instead he feels compelled (by the H.S.) to address an urgent matter, something which threatens these Christian's faith.

READ Jude 4

"Certain people have crept in unnoticed..." False teachers! Jude is not very fond of these false teachers to say the least. After all, they twist God's truth. They deceive Christians. They threaten to destroy our faith. Jude writes to this group of believers who have come in contact with some of these false teachers and been exposed to their heresies. These false teachers came into the church and have creating divisions by the things they teach. They claim to have a superior knowledge but they lie ("they deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ"). This gets back to what John taught in 1 John Ch 4 about how to identify a false teacher – by what they say about Jesus.

Does Jude think these people are saved? Well, he says they are "designated for this condemnation," marked for destruction. Paul says, "There is therefore now NO condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom 8:1). So the answer is NO! Jude's intention here is to warn true believers about the danger of hanging around and listening to the lies from these false teachers. Beware of them and resist them!

READ Jude 5-7

Jude shows from O.T. history how God punished the wicked in the past. The first two examples involve groups who once claimed to be on God's side, but who turned away – the disbelieving children of Israel and the fallen angels (Lucifer and those who followed him in his heavenly rebellion against God). The last example is that of a blatantly godless

bunch of people, Sodom and Gomorrah. Jude's point: If God punished them, He will surely punish the arrogant ones who deny the authority, the deity and the teachings of Jesus. They claim to have a superior knowledge but they insult God. Jude says that they three "serve as an example" (v 7). It didn't end well for them and it is not going to end well for these false teachers either if they do not repent – "a punishment of eternal fire" (v 7).

READ Jude 8-10

What? What's all this about? Well, here Jude describes an incident recorded in a Jewish piece of literature *The Assumption of Moses* (sometimes it is called *The Testament of Moses*). It is a Jewish apocryphal work that was falsely attributed to Moses. It tells how Michael the archangel argued with Satan over the body of Moses. In v 9 Jude actually quotes from part of this apocryphal work. I believe that since Jude is writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, this incident likely did happen but it is not recorded in the Bible. So what's Jude's point? Not even this mighty angel of God, Michael, dared to bad-mouth or curse Satan. By contrast these false teachers "blaspheme all that they do not understand," (v 10). They're brash, bold & egotistical, but spiritually ignorant – they are clueless and don't even know it. We don't know exactly what these false teachers said but it had something to do with railing against the powers and authorities of darkness. Christian or not, you don't want to do that. Let God deal with them. We are simply to resist the devil not argue or talk back to him.

READ Jude 11

"Woe to them!" These false teachers follow the examples of Cain, Balaam and Korah. All of these appeared to follow God at one time in their life but at some point they all rejected God's truth and went their own way. And all of them ended up being punished severely for it. [*explain in more detail if class does not remember Balaam's and Korah's sins*]

READ Jude 12-13

Jude uses six phrases to describe false teachers: "hidden reefs" (dangerous), "feeding themselves" (self-serving), "waterless clouds" (offer empty hope), "fruitless trees" (appear to provide spiritual food but provide nothing) "wild waves of the sea" (wreaking havoc in the church) and "wandering stars" (meteors, comes in brightly and then quickly fades away).

READ Jude 14-15

Jude directly quotes from Enoch's prophecy about the second coming of the Messiah (we know now that this is Jesus) and His judgment upon the ungodly. "Ten thousand of His holy ones" is a reference to believers. We know this from Rev 19. This prophecy which he actually quotes from is contained in the *Book of Enoch* which is an ancient Hebrew apocalyptic religious text, ascribed by tradition to Enoch, who was the great-grandfather of Noah. It is not part of the Bible. Again, though, Jude is under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and so what he says here he believes to be true. Jude's point is that when Jesus returns these false teachers are going to get what is coming to them... along with the rest of the ungodly people who reject Jesus Christ. Of course this is all made clear in the Book of Revelation which Jude would not have known about since it had not been written yet.

READ Jude 16

The false teachers, they are a problem!

READ Jude 17

"But YOU..." You believers in Jesus Christ, you true Christians...

REMEMBER the predictions (teachings) of the apostles. We Christians today have a distinct advantage over the believers Jude's day because we can sit down in the quiet of our own homes and read what the Apostles wrote in the Bible. What did the Apostles predict would happen? Well, Jude helps his audience out by quoting the Apostle Peter here.

READ Jude 18-19

Jude quotes from what we know as 2 Peter 3:3. "...scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires" [and casting doubts on what God said]. The false teachers that have infiltrated the church are the very ones Peter warned about. And their teachings – THEIR version of the truth – is dividing the fellowship. They are worldly minded. They do not possess the Holy Spirit. As I pointed out before they aren't even saved! Again, read church history. This will happen over and over again for the next two centuries. So Jude's first exhortation to these believers is to remember what the Apostles said. Remember the truth!

READ Jude 20-21

"But YOU..." Not only should these believers remember the truth, but they need to REMAIN in it. Keep on growing in your faith. Continue to live in God's love. The message of First Second and Third John is that truth (what we know to be true), love and obedience go hand in hand. Jude says, you know the truth, remember it and remain in it. Apply it, live it!

READ Jude 22-23

"And have MERCY on those who doubt." In the church at this time there exists a lot of doubt and fear. My personal observation is that this is an area that many of us Christians lack in. Mercy (with grace and compassion being closely related). A lot of us frankly tend to be very judgmental of others. Jude urges these believers to show mercy, concern for those who doubt. Help them. The idea is that you who are stronger in your faith (more mature, knowledgeable) have an obligation to help those who may be weaker spiritually than you (those who are struggling in their spiritual journey).

This term that Jude uses of "snatching them out of the fire" (v 23) reminds me of the last two verses in the Book of James: "My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth [this is what is going on in Jude's day] and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever

brings back a sinner from his wanderings [what Jude is urging his readers to do] will save his soul from death [hell] and will cover a multitude of sins. This is what we are called to do as believers, to help each other out spiritually. Jude urges his readers to "Show mercy with fear..." Realize what's on the line, the very souls of men and women, the judgment of God upon them if they do not repent and follow Christ.

I would say this applies now more than ever! We have a responsibility to the lost to tell them how they can be saved. We also have a responsibility to the brothers and sisters in Christ who have wandered away to go and put our arms around them and bring them back --- or at least try.

READ Jude 24-25

A great doxology! Jude expresses his confidence that God can do what for true believers? Two promises are mentioned here for us. First, that God can and will KEEP us from falling away from the faith. Our hope, our confidence is in our only God and Savior Jesus Christ. So while there is some apostasy going on, God protects His elect, true believers. Second, in the end our Advocate Jesus Christ PRESENTS us before God's throne blameless, possessing not our own righteousness, but the imputed righteousness of Christ. "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful" (Heb 10:23). To this great promise Jude says, "Amen" It is so, we agree.

We can't do this on our own. We need the power of Christ!

"In Christ alone my hope is found. He is my light, my strength, my song. This Cornerstone, this solid Ground; Firm through the fiercest drought and storm. No power of hell, no scheme of man can ever pluck me from His hand. Till He returns or calls me home, here in the power of Christ I'll stand!"