

## **The Letter from Jude** (An Introduction)

Good morning! I hope you have had a great start to your day. Before we begin our study of Jude, I want to take a moment to thank you for entering this study with me. Each day I'll be imagining that you and I are sitting down together at a table with a cup of coffee (or whatever you like to drink) and our study Bibles and spending 20 minutes together interacting with God's Word. I believe God will meet with us and teach us much about Himself and how we can live in service to Him.

Once again we will use a simple format made up of 3 questions: WHAT DOES IT SAY? WHAT DOES IT MEAN? WHAT DO I DO WITH IT? This format will help us stay focused, be consistent throughout the entire letter and help us go deep. Let's get started.

*"Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and a brother of James, To those who have been called, who are loved by God the Father and kept by Jesus Christ: Mercy, peace, and love be yours in abundance." (Jude 1-2)*

### **WHAT DOES IT SAY?**

This is a normal greeting that might have appeared on most letters of that day (probably around 66 A.D.). It consists of telling who it is from, who it is to, and a type of blessing. Remember that when we begin studying a passage, it is very helpful to try to outline it. This helps us see more of the details laid out in the passage.

A simple outline of these verses might look like this:

- I. From Jude
  - A. a servant of Jesus Christ
  - B. a brother of James
  
- II. To Christians (implied)
  - A. to those who have been called
  - B. to those who are loved by God the Father
  - C. to those who are kept by Jesus Christ

III. May you have in abundance

- A. mercy
- B. peace
- C. love

**WHAT DOES IT MEAN?**

*"Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and a brother of James,-* What do we know about Jude? Most scholars believe that Jude (short for Judas) was the half brother of Jesus (Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3). This also means that he was the brother to James, writer of the letter called by that name. Remember also, as with James, Jude didn't believe Jesus was the Messiah until after his resurrection (John 7:5; Acts 1:14). Jude may also have been married and may have taken his wife along with him on his missionary journeys (1 Cor. 9:5).

Isn't it interesting that Jude does not mention his claim to fame (being related to Jesus) but refers to himself as a servant (doulos), a slave of our Lord. This word implies humility, obedience, and absolute loyalty to Jesus. It is the word used to say that one person is completely the property of another person.

Jude's heart was obviously humble. He may not have originally believed in Jesus, but it is clear that after the resurrection, he not only believed but was completely sold out to following Christ.

*To those who have been called, who are loved by God the Father and kept by Jesus Christ:-* Jude is writing to believers...Christians who were called by God to follow His Son. He reminds them of the Father's love and the keeping power of Jesus Christ. What a wonderful greeting and encouragement. We can receive this greeting also. We are called of God to love His Son. We are loved and Christ has the power to keep us from falling away.

*Mercy, peace, and love be yours in abundance.* - What a beautiful blessing! They are facing some trying times (we will look at that tomorrow). They perhaps were tempted to feel unsuccessful, stressed out, and to doubt God's love. Jude senses that and in his greeting prays that they will know and receive in abundance God's unmerited favor (mercy), fruitful and enjoyable relationships (peace), and God's gracious and holy affection (love).

## **WHAT DO I DO WITH IT?**

As I reflected on verse 1 today, the Lord took my mind back to some reflections we made as we studied the Letter of James. I would like to share those thoughts with you again today. Based upon what Jude tells us in the first verse...

1. We can approach the study of this letter with great confidence. It was divinely inspired and written by a brother of our Lord. He was completely dedicated to our Lord and His purposes. The early church had great confidence in Jude's character and leadership. So can we.
2. Jude's description of himself demonstrates to us a level of closeness and dedication to our Lord that we are compelled to pursue as well. Jude calls himself a slave of Jesus Christ. This means that he had yielded to the Son his life (body, mind, and spirit), his possessions, his needs, and his future hopes and dreams. This is the position of a slave and a role to which he chose. He humbled himself and pledged to God complete loyalty and obedience.

Can you say today, "I am the Lord's servant"? Do you want to be able to say that? Have you humbled yourself before Him? Have you come to a place in your Christian walk where you have yielded your life to the Lord?...given Him full control of your body and how it is used?...your mind and how it is used?...your spirit and what it is given to?...your possessions and how they are used? Have you trusted God with your needs?...your future hopes and dreams?

It seems to me that this concept simplifies life a little...don't you think so? Can you imagine going through life believing that ultimately it is not up to you whether you do this or that or go here or go there. It is not up to you where you work or where you live or who you know. All of those things are decided by the One you love and serve; your Master. ***Your purpose is not to succeed in life but to succeed in a relationship – with the Lord Jesus.***

What if the successful outcome of your life is not based upon how smart you are, how well you can manipulate the system, who you know, or how talented you are at this or that. Imagine a life where you simply love the Lord, fellowship with Him, and do what He says. Check out Matthew 11: 28-30. It makes more sense now, doesn't it?

We are weary and burdened because we have all this stress and pressure to succeed...to produce...to have...to do. But as the Lord's servants, we are to take on the yoke (control) of a gentle and humble Master, and our lives should get simpler, easier, and less stressed.

Isn't there something about this kind of life that sounds appealing to you?...A life where God calls the shots and the shots he calls are just perfect for your life. Yeah...me too!

Maybe this is something you should talk to God about today!

*Pastor Will*

## The Letter from Jude

*"Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith, that was once for all entrusted to the saints."* (Jude 3)

### **WHAT DOES IT SAY?**

Let's outline this verse.

- I. Dear friends
  - A. I was eager to write you about the salvation we share
  - B. But I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith
    - 1. The faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints

### **WHAT DOES IT MEAN?**

*Dear friends* - Jude obviously knows the Christian group he is writing to. It is a phrase that means that there is an established relationship between he and them. Perhaps (and this is highly likely) Jude is an overseer who pastorally looks after several areas of churches to which this group is one. He will use this phrase 2 more times (17, 20) in this short letter.

*...although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith,* - It appears that he was in the middle of another writing project. It sounds like it was more of a general treatise on the Christian faith (maybe like a book of theology or doctrine).

This writing project was interrupted by some information Jude received. Verse 4 indicates he was told some men had come to the area, made their way into a place of influence into that church and were using that place of influence to teach things about God and His Gospel that were not true. We will go into this much deeper tomorrow.

This was so disturbing to Jude that he set aside the other writing project and penned this short note to warn them and to spur them on to *contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints* - Let's look at this phrase and notice 3 big things.

- *The faith we have was "entrusted" to us.* Our faith in Christ and our knowledge of the Gospel are not things we have discovered on our own...by ourselves. This knowledge and faith have been handed down to us through the written Word of God and through the Spirit filled lives of those who have gone before us.

This also means that if it was entrusted to us then we must entrust it to others. We are the recipient and the bearer of responsibility for it.

- *The faith we have was "once for all" entrusted to us.* Notice the phrase "once for all". This indicates an unchangeable quality about it. This faith (truth about God and His Gospel) was delivered to us in tact...once for all...not in need of changing. This means that we have the responsibility to respond to it as it is and not mess with it...not change it to fit our desires...not adapt it to our culture. Truth is not changed to fit the recipient but the recipient must allow the Truth to change him.
- *The faith we have must be contended for.* The word contend means defend. We have a faith that must be defended. Every Christian must be its defender and protector. This defense is the duty of every generation of the church. This is a major part of Jude's emphasis in this letter and a subject upon which we will spend considerable time.

### **WHAT DO I DO WITH IT?**

1. Had you ever thought of yourself as being entrusted with the faith? God saw to it that you were entrusted with the Truth about Him and His Gospel. It is entrusted to you. Entrusted to you so you can believe it, receive it, and enjoy it. It is also entrusted to you so you can be part of entrusting it to others.

Who do you entrust it to? Anyone with whom God has given you influence over. Your kids?...yes of course. But it must go beyond your kids. You have more influence than that. How about your friends, your family...even acquaintances?

Remember, we have to entrust it to others...in tact. No changing it. To do this you must know it...in tact. You must read it, study it, learn it so you can give it to others responsibly.

Aren't we tempted to look at the faith we have very differently than how Jude is describing it? Faith for some in America is something they have or get that is there to benefit them...to make their lives better...more interesting...more successful. They might even say faith is personal and something that is private and not to be discussed. Jude would never accept such a view of "the faith".

Your faith is something entrusted to you by God. By giving it to you, He expects something from you with it. He expects faithfulness to it and for you to entrust it to others.

How are you doing with this idea? I bet if you talked to the Lord about this He would begin to inspire and empower you to obey.

*Pastor Will*

## The Letter from Jude

*"For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, who change the grace of God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord."* (Jude 4)

### **WHAT DOES IT SAY?**

- I. Certain men
  - A. their condemnation was written about long ago
  - B. they have secretly slipped in among you
  - C. they are godless men
  - D. they change the grace of God into a license for immorality
  - E. they deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign Lord.

### **WHAT DOES IT MEAN?**

Jude changed his writing plans from a general treatise on the doctrines of God to an urgent, pressing letter to the church because "*certain men*" were causing trouble within the church and the larger community of the faith. In Jude's letter verses 4-19 are given to describing these men and the judgment from God that awaits them. We'll cover verse 4 today. In verse 4, Jude tells us 5 things about these men.

*...whose condemnation was written about long ago* - The first thing he tells us is that the consequences for their teaching and actions were written about long ago in the Scriptures. In the Bible, God often times had the prophets write down stern warnings regarding those who misrepresent God and His Truth. In fact, Jude gives 7 different Scriptural references to their fate. We will wait until we get to those verses to study them.

The second thing Jude tells us about these men is that they *secretly slipped in among you*. The Greek word translated "secretly slipped in" always signifies something negative or an evil motive. What Jude is saying is that these men had slowly, gradually, and undetected gained the trust of these Christian people to the point that they were allowed to be in places of authority and influence. Obviously these men did not go through a thorough system of accountability and screening. They were awarded trust simply by the impressiveness of their intellect or the persuasiveness of their speech. They were not

tested on what they knew regarding the "apostle's doctrines". If they had, they would have never gotten as far as they did and would not have been in a place where they could have deceived Christians.

The third thing Jude tells us about these men is that *they are godless men*. This means literally that they were without God. Their hearts and minds and actions were without God. There was no trace of Him in them. Their hearts could not contain God's Spirit because their minds did not accept and embrace the Truth of God and as a consequence, their lives could not produce holiness. What is astonishing about this is that many of the Christians must not have been able to tell that these men were godless. They needed Jude to reveal this to them. Wow! More on this at the end.

Jude then gives the reader two distinguishing characteristics of godless men. As he gives us these characteristics, he tells us the fourth and fifth things about these guys. He said *they change the grace of God into a license for immorality* and *they deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign Lord*. In simple terms this means they taught it was OK to sin and that Jesus was not the only way to be saved. They used the concept of the grace of God to encourage people to not care whether they sinned or not. They probably said things like, *'Don't worry about sin. Your body is fallen and you can't help it. God's grace is big enough to cover your sin so it is alright to keep on doing it. If you sin it won't affect your relationship with God'...*and so on.

Any religious doctrine that lets you feel OK about your sin is definitely NOT from God. The whole purpose of the Cross was to destroy the devil's work in our lives...to break our slavery to sin (Romans 6:1-2, 6-14; 1John 3:4-10)

There are lots of ways to deny Jesus Christ. One could simply deny he existed, or deny his true identity by making up lies about him, or one could deny him by claiming to know him but making choices that dishonor him. We are not sure which of the three were used by these men. It appears the last two choices describe more accurately what was going on there. In summary, Jude tells us the marks of a godless person are: they do not honor Jesus Christ, either with their doctrine or their choices. They love their sin.

### **WHAT DO I DO WITH THIS?**

1. Let's go back to the phrase "godless men". It is astonishing that these Christians could not recognize godlessness, even when this

quality was right in front of them. But almost as soon as I say that, I wonder if today's Christians are any better at discerning godlessness.

I think we would all agree that spotting godlessness among the non religious is easier for us. We can tell when we see murder, adultery, lying, cursing, and the like that this is not godliness. But can we discern ungodliness when we are around those who are religious... around those who use the name of Jesus in their speech... around those who do very good things for others?

I want to use a modern day TV personality as an example. A friend sent me a youtube clip a few weeks ago. Take a moment to listen to this and then we will talk a little more:

[Http://UK.youtube.com/watch?v=JW4LLwkgmqA](http://UK.youtube.com/watch?v=JW4LLwkgmqA)

Be honest...when you listened to Oprah talk about her beliefs did you think "godlessness"? When you heard her talk did you think "she is a nice person...etc." and just want to give her a pass? Did anything rise up inside of you when you heard her *"deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign Lord"*? Isn't this what Jude was talking about? Didn't he say that one of the characteristics of godlessness is the denial that Jesus Christ is who He said He was? People are hesitant in calling a person ungodly because the person is educated, professional, or has polished social skills. God says those who believe such things are ungodly.

Maybe the reason we (American Christians) have trouble discerning godlessness is because we are mistaken in our definition of godliness. Some how we have come to think that things like warm personality, mass likeability, financial success, and witty intelligence are equivalent to godliness.

We see godliness and these other qualities as all admirable and desirable qualities so in our minds we might be tempted to see them as equal in value. This is far from the truth. Godliness is that which pertains to the nature of God. The others are simply attractive human traits.

Jude taught us yesterday that the Faith (the truth of God and His Gospel) must be protected and defended. In context, Jude was writing this as it pertains to the church...the community of the faith. Other than praying and ("the prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective", James 5:16), we cannot do much to correct Oprah's thinking or stop her destructive spiritual influence in the world.

But Jude's words are directed more to the community of the faith. We must be careful who/what we allow into the leadership of this community. We must be discerning as to who we give spiritual influence into our lives. Sometimes discernment can get even harder. These days, false teachers can creep into our lives through entities that wear the "Christian" logo and come to us through programming via TV, radio, and other media outlets. We might be tempted to think that warm personalities, mass likeability, financial success, and witty intelligence are the same as godliness.

These people should be tested before they are trusted. Just because they can raise enough money to buy television air time or have a large following doesn't mean we should trust their words. Their walk must match their talk and their talk must match the truth given by the apostles and inspired writers written in the Bible.

May the Lord help us to know the truth so intimately that we can easily tell when someone is distorting it.

*Pastor Will*

## The Letter from Jude

*<sup>5</sup>Though you already know all this, I want to remind you that the Lord<sup>[a]</sup> delivered his people out of Egypt, but later destroyed those who did not believe. <sup>6</sup>And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home—these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day. <sup>7</sup>In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire. (Jude 5-7)*

### **WHAT DOES IT SAY?**

Good morning everyone! I hope your day has gotten off to an enjoyable start. Before we dive into today's passage, let's spend just a minute reviewing what we have learned in Jude's letter so far.

Jude had planned to write a letter of a different kind to these Christians but changed his mind after he heard that certain men had gained favor with this Christian community and were allowed to move into places of spiritual influence. Jude calls these men "godless men" because of what they were teaching. They taught that Jesus was not who he claimed to be and that one could sin as much as he wanted and God was OK with that. Jude's purpose for writing this letter was to inspire belief and action from these Christians to stop these men from teaching and influencing God's people.

So far, Jude has identified these men and exposed the error in their teaching. Now Jude intends to highlight the judgment that awaits them if they don't repent.

- I. Though you already know this, I want to remind you...
  - A. The Lord delivered his people out of Egypt but later destroyed those who did not believe. (5)
  - B. Some of the angels lost their authority, heavenly home, and are awaiting a terrible judgment because they stopped following God. (6)
  - C. The people of Sodom and Gomorrah gave themselves to sexual immorality and perversion and were eternally punished by God. (7)

### **WHAT DOES IT MEAN?**

Jude is not only trying to open the eyes of the Christians in that place but also through the Christians, trying to warn the false teachers that they are on a path of eternal destruction. He uses 3 different stories from the Old Testament to accomplish this.

*...the Lord delivered his people out of Egypt, but later destroyed those who did not believe.* - He reminds them of the story in Numbers 13 and 14. The Mighty Hand of God had delivered Israel out of slavery to Egypt. He led them up to the border of the Promised Land. They sent spies into Canaan to see what they would be up against when they entered into the land. All the spies, except for two (Joshua and Caleb) came back with negative reports.

The people listened to the bad reports, refused to trust God, and would not enter the land the Lord God had commanded them to enter. As a result, he declared that none of them would ever enter the Promised Land, with the exception of Joshua and Caleb. Instead they would wander the wilderness until that generation died off.

Jude was using this story to tell those false teachers that just like those in the story who considered themselves "God's people" but who died in the wilderness and never saw the Promised Land (an OT typology of Heaven) so would their story go. They also believed they were part of "God's people" in the church but in reality they had strayed from true belief and would suffer the same outcome as those in the wilderness.

*And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home—these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day.* - Jude gives them a second history lesson. He reminds them of the fallen angels referred to in Isaiah 14. Because of pride and lust for a position that was not his to have, Lucifer fell from his position of authority and was forced to leave his home in heaven. A third of the angels went with him. Now they all are bound to a life of fallen darkness and await a most dreadful judgment.

Jude was using this story to tell the false teachers that just like the angels who had once tasted the goodness of God, who stopped trusting in the Sovereign Lord, fell from their place of honor, and will experience an eternity apart from God, so shall their story go.

Perhaps the men in Jude's day started off believing the truth of the gospel but became deceived themselves. Somewhere along the way they stopped trusting in God and his truth. Consequently, they await the same fate as the angels...unless they repent.

*In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire.* - Jude gives a third history lesson. He reminds them of the story of Sodom and Gomorrah recorded in Genesis 19. Lot (Abraham's nephew) was living in Sodom. God decided, because of the great sexual perversion of the cities, He would destroy them. He told Abraham of his plans and because of Lot, Abraham interceded for the cities (Genesis 18).

God told Abraham that if he could find as little as ten righteous people in the cities, he would spare them. God's angels, disguised as men, went to investigate. They met Lot as soon as they entered the city and Lot quickly whisked them off to his house. Word quickly spread throughout the town that Lot had male visitors.

That night all the men from that part of the city came to Lot's house with plans to rape the two "new" men who came into town. After hearing this, the angels told Lot to gather his family and get them out of the city immediately because they were going to destroy the cities. The next morning the Lord rained down burning sulfur. Every person remaining in the cities was destroyed.

Jude uses this story to illustrate to the false teachers that if they follow after immorality, the judgment of God is fierce and final. If they continue in the way they are going, their story will end in the same way.

### **WHAT DO I DO WITH IT?**

1. For some people it is hard to imagine that God will judge and pronounce final destruction on anyone. Their view of God is only as the lamb of God....the loving shepherd.

The Scriptures also tell us that our God is a "consuming fire" (Hebrews 12:29). The Scriptures also describe Jesus as the "Rider on the White Horse" from whose mouth comes the sword which will strike down the nations and who will kill with the sword the kings of the earth and their armies who have sided with the beast in the last days (Revelation 19:11-21)

For a more complete view of God and a spiritually healthy theology, we must let the whole of Scripture teach us about God's nature and the roles He fulfills.

God hates sin but loves the sinner. He offers incredible grace, and through this grace he offers a salvation that can and will break the power of sin in our lives. He offers full freedom from the slavery of sin (Romans 6). He offers a clean heart and a transformed life.

However, there is a time coming when grace and mercy to the sinner will cease to be offered. To those people, Christ will not offer himself as the lamb and shepherd. He will at that time fulfill the role of the final judge (Revelation 20:11-15)

The writer to the Hebrews offers us sound Truth today. He says, *"See to it my brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first.* (Heb. 3:12-14) The word "if" in that verse is a big word.

We are to keep our own hearts from turning away from the Lord. We are to guard our own minds from being deceived from the enemy's lies. Is this an area you are struggling with today? Have you given your mind to some questionable teaching?...some questionable teacher? Have you allowed a well known person like Oprah to tempt you to question the Gospel as handed down to by the Apostles?

Did, at first, the message sound very alluring/freeing but now you find that your ability to trust God is fading? In this "new" teaching, is the focus all about you, your needs, your happiness and not about God's call of holiness to his people? Ask our Father to show you His Truth again and to give you discernment regarding false teachers and false teaching.

Maybe you have a friend, family member, or a co-worker who is opening up to "new" teachings. Share this devotional with him/her, pray for this person to be discerning...to have his/her eyes opened by the Lord. May we guard our own hearts from anything that might harden our hearts toward our God. May we hold fast to the Truth and walk in joyful obedience all the days of our lives. Amen.

*Pastor Will*

## The Letter from Jude

*<sup>8</sup>In the very same way, these dreamers pollute their own bodies, reject authority and slander celestial beings. <sup>9</sup>But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against him, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!" <sup>10</sup> Yet these people speak abusively against whatever they do not understand; and what things they do understand by instinct, like unreasoning animals—these are the very things that destroy them. (Jude 8-10)*

### **WHAT DOES IT SAY?**

Yesterday, we read that Jude warned the false teachers that if they continued in their lies and did not repent, God's fierce judgment would be theirs. Today, Jude compares these teachers to false prophets of the OT and identifies certain characteristics of their ministries. Let's outline our passage.

#### I. These dreamers

- A. pollute their own bodies
- B. reject authority
- C. slander celestial beings
  - Even the archangel Michael ...did not bring a slanderous accusation against the devil...
- D. speak abusively against whatever they do not understand
  - What they do understand they do by instinct like unreasoning animals
  - These are the very things that destroy them.

### **WHAT DOES IT MEAN?**

We would have to admit that at first glance Jude's words seem a little strange. He is definitely fired up and deeply wants to protect this group of Christians from placing any confidence in the false teachers and from allowing them to have any influence at all in their lives. So in keeping with his goals, he begins another round of uncovering and exposing their evil deeds.

*<sup>8</sup>In the very same way, these dreamers pollute their own bodies, reject authority and slander celestial beings.* - Jude calls these false teachers "dreamers". The phrase in the Greek (enupniazomenoi) is grammatically attached to all three verbs (pollute, reject, and

slander). The meaning here is that in all three actions the false teachers act like dreamers.

In other words as they pollute their own bodies, reject authority, and slander angels they resemble someone who is dreaming and who allows unreal images and scenarios to fill their minds. Even though the false teachers believe these things, they are not thinking and living in God's reality. In other words, their beliefs about God, their philosophies of life, and their dealings with the "spiritual" world are only fantasies and not part of God's real world...His real plan. In the OT, false prophets were often referred to as "dreamers" (Deut. 13:1-5).

*"To pollute their own bodies"* means to fill it with pollution (sin) or to defile it. They lived by raw instinct rather than God's principles. *"To reject authority"* means to reject any person or idea that would seek to tell them what to do or think. No one could correct them or knows more or understands better. *"To slander celestial beings"* means to show disrespect for those whom God created a little above us (Psalm 8:5) and who have a higher realm of authority and responsibility.

Perhaps these men would refer to themselves as men who could talk to angels, fellowship with angels, have authority or command over angels or understand things that even angels have not learned. Maybe they claimed that their so called knowledge of Christ entitled them to have power above that of an angel. The general idea here is that they were lifting themselves up over an above God's celestial creation. They claimed an authority that God's creative order does not allow and consequently talked down at the angelic order.

*<sup>9</sup>But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against him, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!"* - Jude includes an example of this last point from one of the books of the apocryphal (Jewish spiritual history books) called The Assumption of Moses. The story goes like this. After Moses died the task of burying Moses body was given to Michael the Archangel. The devil wanted to take his body and disputed with Michael for it. This story must have been common knowledge to Jude's audience. Jude uses this "common knowledge" to make a powerful point.

The point Jude is making here is that when Michael was denying the devil access to Moses body, he didn't say anything disrespectful to the devil, and he (Michael) was an archangel. Michael didn't rebuke

the devil himself but said, "*The Lord rebuke you!*" Michael didn't speak evil of the devil. He left that to the Lord. Michael's job was only to humbly do the Lord's bidding. If an archangel would not do such a thing, why on earth would a man feel he could?

*<sup>10</sup> Yet these people speak abusively against whatever they do not understand; and what things they do understand by instinct, like unreasoning animals—these are the very things that destroy them.* - Yet this described the heart of these false teachers. They were so puffed up with themselves and their "truth" that they "*spoke abusively against whatever they do not understand...*" Persons and topics that were out of the jurisdiction of their actual knowledge were treated with contempt. They lived out of instinct (that base level, flesh satisfying, part of our nature. When it came down to it, they acted and reacted like animals, based purely on instinct instead of reason and principle. This kind of living would destroy anyone.

### **WHAT DO I DO WITH IT?**

1. Jude gives us some interesting insight into the nature and practices of false teachers. Let's review what we've learned.

- They are dreamers. They think and act in a way that does not match up with God's spiritual reality. They confuse spiritual fantasy with spiritual reality. They frequently have "just heard something from the Lord in a dream".
- They love their sin and believe God is OK with it. They twist ideas to the point that they try to get others to believe that God wants them to act like this.
- They are always right and no one knows something they don't.
- They, with great arrogance, speak as if they have power and authority above even the angelic realm. Every one else (even other Christians) are not as enlightened as they.

To some of you these ideas may seem far fetched for today's spiritual climate. But I would invite you to simply turn on your TV set and watch some "Christian" broadcasting for a while. There are several "teachers" who have regular teaching ministries on these stations who seem to fit some of these descriptions.

Several of these teachers will tell us:

- God speaks audibly to them in dreams even though the content of those dreams goes against what the Scriptures teach clearly and what other Christians believe to be true.

- God wants us to be rich...to have all the money our hearts desire (isn't this a back door way of promoting greed?) They say material possessions are the mark and indicator of how well you are doing spiritually. The Scriptures tell us greed and materialism are sins.
- They have a higher knowledge of God and spiritual things. The church, in general, is all wrong and in need of what they have. And they are glad to sell it to us even though Jesus tells us "freely you have received, freely give." (Matthew 10: 10)
- They have spoken with angels and fellowshiped with them. I've heard dozens of them as they have preached and prayed say things like, "*Satan, I rebuke you and demand that you come out of so and so....Devil, you are finished, you are beneath me...Satan, I bind you...you are relieved of your power, your authority...*"

Have you heard them too? How do these attitudes and words stand up against what Jude told us today? Jude's words are there to help us be discerning. His motive long ago was to protect this group of Christians from placing any confidence in these false teachers and from allowing them to have any influence at all in their lives.

I believe that is how God wants to use this letter today. God wants us to be discerning and wary of who we trust with spiritual matters. Be careful who you listen to...who you give influence in your life to. There are many false teachers out there today. Sometimes their messages come to us via what seem like legitimate Christian ministries.

God expects us to know His Word and be able, with the Spirit's help, to discern the bad guys and keep ourselves and those we love away from them. We obviously don't want to bad mouth people. But we can hear what they are saying, inspect it for validity and truth, and keep ourselves safe if we discern their message as harmful.

If we take Jude's mandate seriously to defend the Truth, I think sometimes the difficult task will be to be discerning without becoming a pessimistic and judgmental person.

Keep your spiritual eyes open!

*Pastor Will*

## The Letter from Jude

<sup>11</sup> *Woe to them! They have taken the way of Cain; they have rushed for profit into Balaam's error; they have been destroyed in Korah's rebellion.*

<sup>12</sup> *These men are blemishes at your love feasts, eating with you without the slightest qualm—shepherds who feed only themselves. They are clouds without rain, blown along by the wind; autumn trees, without fruit and uprooted—twice dead. <sup>13</sup>They are wild waves of the sea, foaming up their shame; wandering stars, for whom blackest darkness has been reserved forever. (Jude 11-13)*

### **WHAT DOES IT SAY?**

Jude is rallying the community of Christians to stop receiving ministry from false teachers. He wants to help them learn to discern for themselves. Let's outline today's passage.

- I. Woe to them (the false teachers)
  - A. they take the way of Cain
  - B. they rush for profit into Balaam's error
  - C. they have been destroyed in Korah's rebellion
  - D. they are blemishes at your love feasts
  - E. they are shepherds who feed only themselves
  - F. they are clouds without rain
  - G. they are autumn trees without fruit
  - H. they are wild waves foaming up
  - I. they are wandering stars

### **WHAT DOES IT MEAN?**

Wow! Jude is intense on his desire to expose these guys for who they are. It is obvious that Jude sees this whole scene as a spiritual battle. He knows the enemy has sent in false teachers, masquerading as godly people, but in reality, they were godless men...false shepherd who were misrepresenting Jesus Christ and His Gospel.

Jude, verse after verse keeps peeling back layer after layer of falsehood, hoping to thoroughly convince this smaller band of Christians not to allow themselves to be influenced at all by these wolves in sheep's clothing.

<sup>11</sup> *Woe to them! They have taken the way of Cain; they have rushed for profit into Balaam's error; they have been destroyed in Korah's rebellion.* - Jude, once again, looks back in history to find parallels to the wicked men of his day. He names three notorious sinners. First, there is Cain, the murderer of his brother Abel (Genesis 4:1-15). Motivated by jealousy, anger, and selfishness, Cain stole from Abel the most valuable asset he had...his life. Cain is remembered as a murderer and the epitome of selfishness.

Second, there is Balaam (Numbers 22-25). There are two stories of Balaam. The first is when Balak attempted to persuade Balaam to curse the people of Israel, because he feared their power. Balak offered Balaam great rewards if he would do it. Balaam was a covetous man and would have struck a deal with Balak if God hadn't given Balaam a glimpse of what would happen to him if he did. God uses a very unlikely tool to get Balaam's attention (Numbers 22:27-32).

The second story surrounds Israel's seduction into worshipping a pagan god named Baal. This had dreadful consequences to the nation. In Numbers 31:8, 16 we read that it was Balaam who was responsible for that seduction and he perished miserably because he taught others to sin. Balaam is remembered as a man who would leave the way of righteousness in order to gain wealth and as one who taught others to sin.

Third, there was Korah. His story is in Numbers 16:1-35. The sin of Korah was that he rebelled against the guidance of Moses when the sons of Aaron and the tribe of Levi were made the priests of the nation. He could not accept this decision. He wanted to exercise a priestly function which he had no right to do. When he did, he died and all his companions with him. Korah is remembered for refusing to accept God given authority.

In short, Jude is simply saying that the false teachers of his day think and act like the three notorious sinners of the OT.

<sup>12</sup> *These men are blemishes at your love feasts, eating with you without the slightest qualm—shepherds who feed only themselves.* - The "love feasts" of Jude's day were very much like a huge lunch after the church service. They would all bring what they could and share with each other. This was a time when people from different ethnic and social backgrounds would care for each other's lives.

Unfortunately, both Peter (2 Peter 2:13) and Paul (1 Cor. 11:17-22) tell us that the love feast were also places of abuse. They became opportunities for cliques to develop where food was hoarded for certain groups and other groups were denied. It also could become a place of excess and inappropriate celebration (drunkenness). The focus could become one of selfish celebration rather than sharing all things together.

Jude describes these teachers as “so called” shepherds who are not interested in the welfare of their sheep but are only concerned for their own needs. They seem to fit right in but in reality are “blemishes”, irregular and flawed individuals faking their way through it.

*They are clouds without rain, blown along by the wind; autumn trees, without fruit and uprooted—twice dead. <sup>13</sup>They are wild waves of the sea, foaming up their shame; wandering stars, for whom blackest darkness has been reserved forever.* - Jude says that they are full of empty promises, like rain clouds that float over without giving any rain. They do not produce any real spiritual fruit like a tree in the fall that has no fruit. They are filled with hectic activity and yet have only a useless and unsightly product to show for it, like the wild waves of the sea beating the bank of the shore and creating lots of foam. They have wandered away from God’s created design and purpose like those stars that fall from the sky and cease to light the night any more.

### **WHAT DO I DO WITH IT?**

1. As I read through these verses day after day, it still strikes me how deceiving the words and actions of these false teachers must have been. Evidently, most of the Christians couldn’t discern this. These teachers would use common Christian words like Christ, church, faith, hope, and love. They taught some things differently from the Apostles but what is so bad about that? Actually, there is a lot wrong with that. Remember verse 3? We are to protect “the faith” that was “once for all” entrusted to the saints. The faith was given to us (through the Scriptures and those in our lives that follow the Scriptures) in tact and does not need improved upon.

Men like Joseph Smith (founder of the Mormon Church) for example thought that the Gospel of the Bible needed improved upon. He believed that God gave him a revelation and an extended gospel to the one already delivered by the Apostles (those who walked with Jesus). He and others also wrote other books that they placed as equivalent

with the Bible. Paul says in Galatians 1:8 said, *"But even if we or an angel from heaven (the Mormon claim) should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned."*

Most of the cults like Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, etc. use common Christian words like Christ, church, faith, hope, and love. But each of their founders claimed a higher knowledge. They claimed that God showed them a way of faith that was above and better than what the Apostles gave us. Sadly, Paul's words in Galatians will apply to these men today, as well.

2. In Jude's day, these false teachers also considered themselves to be Christian. They were inside the church, professing faith in Jesus Christ, possibly looked upon as leaders of Christian thought and champions of truth. But according to Jude, underneath all they said and did, their hearts denied everything that really made up godliness and righteousness.

The relationships they had within the church were merely smoke screens to hide the fact that they were self seeking, worldly minded, and money grubbing individuals. They saw the grace of God as a means to continue in their sin and the power of God as a means to manipulate others for their own personal gain...all the while believing that they somehow were entitled to it...that they somehow stumbled onto a higher way of thinking and living.

I suppose with what Jude has described for us, if we can't discern this type of individual in our day, our "discerner mechanism" may be broken. If I understand Jude correctly, part of the process of discerning an individual's qualification to be a spiritual leader or influence in my life should include the following (but not limited to) observations and questions.

- I should notice whether or not his words and actions all point back to him (like Cain). Does he portray an attitude that it is all about him?...his success?...his plan?...his authority?...his happiness?
- I should notice how fond of money he is (like Balaam). Does he seem to talk about money a lot? Does money seem to be at the center of every plan? Does his list of needs seem endless?

- I should notice his attitude toward the idea of someone else being in authority over him (like Korah). Can he humbly submit to another's leadership (like the Apostles or the Bible or someone else in his life) or must he always be the leader...the boss?

Jude believes it is so important to get this into our heads and hearts. Be Careful Out There! *"Our enemy prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith..."* (1 Peter 5:8-9)

*Pastor Will*

## The Letter from Jude

*<sup>14</sup>Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men: "See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones <sup>15</sup>to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him." <sup>16</sup>These men are grumblers and faultfinders; they follow their own evil desires; they boast about themselves and flatter others for their own advantage. (Jude 1:14-16)*

### **WHAT DOES IT SAY?**

Good morning! I hope your day has gotten off to a great start! The Psalmist said, *'Blessed is the man...whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. This person is like a tree planted by streams of water which yields its fruit in season...'* (Psalm 1:1-3)

Just like the constant supply of nourishment (water) helps the tree yield fruit, so it is in our lives. The constant supply of nourishment (God's Word) enables our lives to produce spiritual fruit when the time is right. Let's keep God's Word in our hearts and minds constantly. Let's "bump" our head/heart against it day and night. Are you ready to get started on our passage for today?

#### I. Enoch prophesied

- A. the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones
- B. to judge everyone
  - To convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done and of all the harsh words they have spoken against him.

#### II. These men (the false teachers he has been talking about)

- A. are grumblers and faultfinders
- B. they follow their own evil desires
- C. they boast about themselves
- D. they flatter others for their own advantage

## **WHAT DOES IT MEAN?**

<sup>14</sup>*Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men: "See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones <sup>15</sup>to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him."* - Jude once again draws from a common piece of writing in his day...this time, The Book of Enoch. It was supposedly (no one is sure) written by the Enoch mentioned in Genesis 5:4-24. Nonetheless, this book was very popular among Jews in Jude's day and most of his readers would be familiar with it and have some measure of respect for it.

He quotes from Enoch 1:9. In this chapter, Enoch simply affirmed that God will come with thousands of his angels to judge and convict all those who are ungodly. Jude feels that the false teachers of his day fit the description of "ungodly" and will be on the negative end of God's judgment. He then continues to name some of the specific ungodly characteristics these men demonstrate.

<sup>16</sup>*These men are grumblers and faultfinders; they follow their own evil desires; they boast about themselves and flatter others for their own advantage.* - These words are self explanatory. They were people who *complained* all the time and easily *found fault* with others. They were obviously discontent with the life that was allotted to them and found fault with anything and anyone.

They were *slaves to their own carnal lusts* (evil desires), which meant that they had no self control or self discipline. Their actions were governed by their desires rather than God's principles. Their one value in life was pleasure. People like this have no sense of responsibility to others...no sense of honor or duty. They live to make themselves happy.

They are also *boasters or braggarts*. They make sure everyone knows of their strengths and accomplishments. They manipulate to get the credit for whatever happened that was good. And when they do actually give someone else the credit and make people feel good about themselves they do it in such away that they still gain the advantage. They *flatter in order to get the person to like them and then to give to them something of value*.

### **WHAT DO WE DO WITH IT?**

1. I don't know about you but by now, I'm not thinking too highly of these false teachers... They sound like bad news, don't they?

How are you doing with this study? Are you feeling a bit "filled up" with the strong condemnation tone of the letter? Don't worry...the letter takes a turn in just a few more verses.

2. Why do you suppose that Jude seems to go on and on, verse after verse about how wrong and ungodly these guys are? Why does he over and over tell us of the eternal doom of these men and those like them? Doesn't the Scripture also say, *"For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly."* (Romans 5:6)? Didn't Christ die to save men like this? The answer is a resounding "YES"!!! His grace extends even to the likes of these. They can be forgiven if they humble themselves and repent. Doesn't Jude know this? Most certainly he does!

We have to consider the context of this letter to really understand his passion. Two things upset Jude the most. (1) The motive of the false teachers, *"For certain men...have secretly slipped in among you."* (verse 4) Jude tells us they had strategically positioned themselves in this fellowship in order to influence it. (2) The fact that these guys were looked at as leaders in this community of Christians and Jude was deeply concerned of the eternal damage they could do to others.

These reasons are why the passion and why he wanted to communicate in unmistakable terms how dangerous these men were. It is one thing to have bad theology and a carnal lifestyle yourself but it is quite another to be in a position of influence, take advantage of people, and teach others that this is what following Christ is all about.

3. Sometimes in protecting the ones you love there comes a time to put your foot down...to say the hard things...to say the needed things. Sometimes when the stakes are high you have to draw a line in the sand and shout that wrong is wrong and right is right. Sometimes when you love someone so much you have to say things in such a way as to shock them...to leave no room for confusion...to paint such a horrible picture of what it will be like if they don't repent...if they don't turn around.

Sometimes the Truth is conveyed with gentleness and patience and then there are times when the Truth must be conveyed with sternness

and urgency. The latter is what Jude is doing here. I assure you His words are motivated by love...a deep love for people.

This makes me think of Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 5:20 when he said, *"Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God."* Jude sees himself as an ambassador for Christ. He knows that God is pleading to these Christians and to these false teachers...through him. He is imploring both groups on behalf of Christ. To the Christians he is saying *"get close to God so you won't be so easily fooled."* To the false teachers he is saying, *"Understand your wicked ways and repent and be reconciled to Christ so you won't end up like all the examples I have cited."*

Is there anyone in your life that you need to be an ambassador for Christ to?

*Pastor Will*

## The Letter from Jude

*<sup>17</sup>But, dear friends, remember what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ foretold. <sup>18</sup>They said to you, "In the last times there will be scoffers who will follow their own ungodly desires." <sup>19</sup>These are the men who divide you, who follow mere natural instincts and do not have the Spirit. (Jude 17-19)*

### **WHAT DOES IT SAY?**

Jude is wrapping up his exposure of these false teachers to this Christians group. Let's outline our passage.

- I. Remember what the Apostles foretold about in the last times
  - A. There will be scoffers
  - B. These people will follow their own ungodly desires
  - C. They will divide you (the church)
  - D. They follow mere natural instincts
  - E. They do not have the Spirit

### **WHAT DOES IT MEAN?**

Jude is winding down this portion of this letter. He gives both a comforting and summarizing view in these two verses. *<sup>17</sup>But, dear friends, remember what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ foretold. <sup>18</sup>They said to you, "In the last times* - The comforting part is that the Apostles foretold that things like this would happen. They had prophesied that there would be people like this in the church, bringing havoc on the church from within. This type of apostasy should not take them by surprise. This type of behavior and deceit is expected.

*...there will be scoffers who will follow their own ungodly desires." <sup>19</sup>These are the men who divide you, who follow mere natural instincts and do not have the Spirit.* - What was it that the Apostles foretold? They said that in the last times (in the last era of time before Christ returns) there would be people who, from within the church, would mock good and holy things (scoffers). They perhaps would feel that the old ways (Biblical ways) were too old fashioned and that the holy standards found within the Book were outdated and not applicable to them.

Instead of being governed by Truth and God's principles, *"they followed their own ungodly desires...mere natural instincts."* In other words, their

conduct was controlled by their evil (the word is better translated "sensual") desires. Perhaps they felt that the truth was found in themselves and not in God's Word.

(Their thought pattern...)Whatever they felt inside must be the truth and if they were feeling it and attracted to it, then it must be good to do. But God judges it as the mere following of evil desires and natural instincts. Animals follow their instincts, people are to follow God's principles. Go back a few devotionals and listen to the Oprah Church sound bite on line again. Sounds a lot like what Jude is talking about, doesn't it?

Jude says that these men "*divide you.*" They destroy real fellowship among the believers. By their teaching, they shut people out. Perhaps they made people feel less than valuable by creating different classes of people...those who had the higher knowledge and experience and those who did not.

Jude says that by this very final act, he could tell that they "*do not have the Spirit.*" The Spirit unifies, they divided. The Spirit seeks to bring all people to God for reconciliation, they drove people away with their divisiveness.

Perhaps these false teachers were the ones who made a big brag about being the ones who really had the Spirit of God. To them, this claim gave them bragging rights and a superior attitude towards all the others. How powerful Jude's words must have been to the Christian group when he said that no matter what their claim, these false teachers are the ones without the Spirit. The ones the false teachers looked down on were far better off than they were.

### **WHAT DO WE DO WITH IT?**

1. The part of this passage that really grabbed me today was the part where Jude told them "*what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ foretold.* <sup>18</sup>*They said to you, "In the last times..."*" that there would be people like that in the church. This was what we would call prophecy. God gave them the ability to understand something that hadn't happened yet and to communicate that to His people.

Jude reminds them of this prophecy. Why do you think he did it? He had already said a lot about these false teachers. Why did he need more? First of all it was special to have a Word from God from the

Apostles. But second, I believe the main reason he did it was to bring encouragement and instruction.

Think about it for a moment. How would it make you feel if you knew that this terrible thing you were going through hadn't caught God by surprise? What if you learned that He knew it would happen and even expected it? He not only knew about it but had already had the Apostles tell you about it...**"They said to you..."** (18). This Christian group must have forgotten because they obviously didn't see this coming.

God's desire for them was that it wouldn't catch them by surprise either. He told them so they would be on the look out for it...even expect it to happen. He told them so their discernment would be sharpened by making them better able to tell the bad from the good. This is the value of prophesy.

Prophecy is a gift to us. It is designed to encourage us and strengthen our faith by giving us a "heads up" and making us more discerning. It is supposed to protect us and give us wisdom so that those who wish to deceive us will be completely defeated.

But instead of it working this way for these Christians, God had to change Jude's writing project so that He could instruct them about these false teachers (again) who had **"secretly slipped in among"** them (3, 4). The point is if they had really heeded the Apostles' words the first time, there would have been no "secret slipping in".

It makes me wonder about something. I wonder how much foretelling God has already done for our lives for which He had the Apostles write down in the Bible? I wonder how many things we face that we would we have complete victory over if we really would heed what the Apostles' have already told us? Do you think that some of our misunderstandings and discouragements and defeats are a result of not paying much attention to what God has so graciously put in writing for us? Yeah....me too!

Perhaps you are discouraged today...maybe you feel hurt and wounded...sad, lonely, confused, or angry? And instead of walking toward the comfort and instruction of God's Word you are running away from it (staying away from church and the Bible, not praying, etc.).

Just maybe had you really took more seriously the study of God's Word, your response to whatever has discouraged or hurt or wounded or isolated or confused or angered you could have been different! I mean, He has given us so much of His wisdom in areas like finances, relationships, marriage, the work place, parenting, health, stress, and how to handle hurtful wounds we receive from other people. He has told us ahead of time so that when these times come, we are prepared and strong.

It is not too late. The same Word that could have prepared you for victory before the crisis came can still prepare your heart for victory after the crisis has hit.

Why don't you have a heart to heart talk with God today!!!

*Pastor Will*

## The Letter from Jude

*<sup>20</sup>But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit. <sup>21</sup>Keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life. (Jude 20-21)*

### **WHAT DOES IT SAY?**

We see that Jude has changed his focus a little. His letter up until now has been focused on the apostates (those who had strayed from the true faith). His goal was to help the believers recognize bad teaching and to keep the Christians from being influenced by them. Jude now begins to specifically instruct the believers regarding their own faith. Let's outline our verses.

#### I. Dear friends

- A. Build yourselves up in your most holy faith
- B. Pray in the Holy Spirit
- C. Keep yourselves in God's love as you
- D. Wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus to bring you to eternal life.

### **WHAT DOES IT MEAN?**

*<sup>20</sup>But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith...* - The words "*dear friends*" show that Jude knows this group of people and has deep affection for them. He tells them to build themselves up in their most holy faith. The verb phrase "*build yourselves up*" is in a verb tense that indicates a continuous action. We would say it like this, "Build yourselves up in the faith and do it all the time....like every day." They are to strengthen themselves and to add to what they have in this area of faith. They/we can do this by growing in our knowledge of God and by applying what we learn to our lives.

What is our "*most holy faith*"? As we stated several days ago, the term faith, as Jude means it, refers to all that we believe in; the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Scriptures, and the whole salvation history and story as revealed in the Scriptures. All of this (our faith) has been handed down to us and entrusted to us (verse 3). This has come to us from Jesus to the Apostles, the Apostles to the Church, and the Church to us. It is referred to as "*holy*" because it is the only way we can be made righteous before God and through it we can overcome the world (1 John 5:4-5).

*...and pray in the Holy Spirit* - Our prayers without the Holy Spirit's leadership tend to be quite selfish and near sighted. When we pray with the Spirit's direction, He can purify our motives, our desires, and make our prayers right. He moves in our hearts and directs our petitions.

<sup>21</sup>*Keep yourselves in God's love...* - This verb phrase, "*Keep yourselves*" is in the tense that means to have urgency about it. In other words, don't be like the apostates he has been talking about. Be urgent about living under the goodness of God's love. Jude does not mean that we have anything to do with God loving us. We were loved by God even when we were far from a relationship with Him.

His phrase "*God's love*" seems to indicate more of the whole relationship based on God's love. God's love is the umbrella under which we can enjoy a grace filled relationship with God. He is saying to make daily choices that keep us under the umbrella...that honor and cooperate with having a close relationship with God. This is the same thought Jesus taught in John 15:4. This is covenant language. It gives both God's part (His love and mercy) and our part (keep yourselves in).

Keep yourself in God's love *as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.* - Jude is saying that they should be patient in waiting for Christ's return. They should keep their minds on His return and the reward He brings when He does come back...eternal life. Anything we receive from Him is based on His mercy to us.

So in short, Jude tells them to do four things:

- Put forth much consistent energy to grow in your understanding of God and the practice of His Gospel.
- Pray as the Spirit directs you.
- Make choices that keep you in close relationship with Jesus.
- Patiently and expectantly await Jesus return.

### **WHAT DO WE DO WITH IT?**

1. I'm drawn to the first part of verse 20 this morning. "*Build yourselves up in your most holy faith...*" Notice the first three words...

If I read this right, Jude is saying to them (and anyone who would read it later - like us ☺) that we have a responsibility to do something

with what we have been given so that we become stronger and more solid in our faith. His words sound as if I should be intentional about it.

Scripture tells us that faith is a gift from God (Ephesians 2:8). In other words, God enables us to have a disposition to accept truth and initially act on it. We also read that being faithful is the fruit of God's Spirit living in us and leading our lives (Galatians 5:22).

But somewhere between the two, Jude is saying we have the responsibility to put certain things in place in our lives that will add to our faith...build it up...make it stronger...bring maturity to it. After all, our faith is crucial to our relationship with God. Our relationship with Him can be no closer than the strength of our faith.

It is our faith that leads us to repentance and the remission of sins (Acts 10:43), freedom from condemnation (John 3:18), salvation (Mark 16:16), wisdom (John 12:46), access to God (Eph. 3:12), edification (1 Tim. 1:4), preservation (John 10:28), peace (Rom. 5:1), and rest (Heb. 3:7-11).

We are to stand fast in our faith (1 Cor. 16:13), continue in it (Acts 14:22), be strong in it (Rom. 4:20-24), succeed in it (2 Cor. 8:7), be grounded in it (Col. 1:23), have assurance in it (2 Tim. 1:12), and pray for the increase of it (Luke 17:5).

We are to live by it (Rom. 1:17), walk by it (Rom. 4:12), pray by it (Matt. 21:22), resist evil by it (Eph. 6:16), overcome the world by it (1 John 2:13-17), and die in it (Heb. 11:13).

Wow!!! I'd say the condition of our faith should be very important to us, wouldn't you? So then, we have to ask: How do we build ourselves up in our faith? Simply put... Faith grows as the knowledge of God increases (Rom. 10:17) and the experience of His fellowship in real life situations advances (James 1:2-4).

So we could say it like this... the place our faith is built up in is our everyday lives. As we go through our daily lives this is the context for the building up of our faith. It is during the ins and outs of everyday life that we are to grow in our knowledge of God and our experiences of fellowship with Him.

We increase our knowledge of God through an intentional commitment to study His Word (Bible), by listening to sermons and others teach

from the Bible (church, radio, CDs), from reading books written to explain and apply Biblical principles to our lives (Christian Book Store), and by talking to other believers about what we are learning (fellowship).

We experience His fellowship when we acknowledge His presence and leadership in our lives in every circumstance and when we process every event of our lives through the filter of His Truth.

Remember the old saying that if you were in love with something you would "eat, drink, and sleep it"? By that we meant that we were consumed with it, constantly thinking about it all day and even in our dreams. Right now, my son is doing this with baseball. Every waking moment he thinks about it, practices it, and dreams about it.

What would your life be like if you began to "eat, drink, and sleep" God's Truth? What if you became consumed with the faith...with building yourself up in it? What if you learned to see God...sense Him in all you do...acknowledge Him in every event in your life? What if you could look at every experience you faced as an opportunity to fellowship with God and walk in His ways? Talk about building up yourself in the faith!!!

Have you been intentional about growing in your knowledge of God or of relating to God in fellowship? What are you waiting for? One day when life is less busy...when life is less hectic...when you have less on your plate? I don't know if that day will ever come.

It seems to me that for the Christian, faith is everything. And if it is everything...then nothing else should be as important as it. Maybe we should heed Jesus' words on this matter when he said, *"But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things (the needs of life) will be given to you as well"* (Matt. 6:33). Maybe you should talk this out with the Father. Why don't you begin that conversation with Him today?

*Pastor Will*

## The Letter from Jude

*<sup>22</sup>Be merciful to those who doubt; <sup>23</sup>snatch others from the fire and save them; to others show mercy, mixed with fear—hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh. (Jude 22-23)*

Good morning! I hope your days have been filled with wonderful God moments. I hope our time in God's Word has been enjoyable and most of all, spiritually fruitful for you and others. Well, let's grab a cup of coffee and get this day started off right.

We will finish Jude in just a few days. His focus really takes a turn in today's study. Up until now, his focus has been on the real believers...the Christians. He wanted to make sure they were not fooled by the false teaching of some bad religious leaders and they were doing the right things that would help their faith grow.

Now his focus turns to how to actually reach the false teachers and those they have deceived. Imagine the scene. The people in that church and the broader community were affected differently by the false doctrines spread by these men. Jude offers some words of instruction when it comes to trying to evangelize these false teachers and the people they have persuaded.

### **WHAT DOES IT SAY?**

- I. Context: Regarding those who have strayed from the truth
  - A. be merciful to those who doubt
  - B. snatch others from the fire and save them
  - C. to others show mercy, mixed with fear—hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh

### **WHAT DOES IT MEAN?**

It appears that Jude is talking about the false teachers and those they have influenced and has put them in three different categories. Perhaps these categories represent to what level these individuals have been indoctrinated by doctrinal lies about God and the salvation He offers.

The first level of indoctrination describes those who doubt. <sup>22</sup>*Be merciful to those who doubt...* - Perhaps these are those who believe that some of the ideas the false teachers teach might be true. Maybe they are wrestling with doubt over some of the Apostles' teachings. Consequently, they are flirting with falsehood...with wrong concepts about God, salvation, and how we are to live our lives. These individuals are wavering in their judgment of truth. They are partially convinced toward the Gospel and partially convinced toward the false teaches.

The attitude of the believer is to be one of mercy... grace... patience. Truth must be explained with firm but gentle intentionality. When mercy is given to someone it shows respect for that person. Not necessarily respect for what he/she believes but respect for them as a person whom God values greatly.

Rob Bell, pastor of Mars Hill Church, in his DVD teaching series called Nooma: The Bullhorn shows a guy...a Christian who has a particular idea of how to tell people about Jesus. This guy stands on the street with a bullhorn in his hand screaming at people as they walked by, "Repent or you are going to hell..." Rob concludes with, "Bullhorn guy, I don't think it is working. All the yelling and the judgment and the condemnation, I don't think it is working. I actually think it is making things worse. I don't think it's what Jesus had in mind." Jude is advocating for something different, as well.

The second level of indoctrination Jude speaks of is the group of people who require this approach - <sup>23</sup>*snatch others from the fire and save them...* - These "*others*" obviously have gone further in this deception than those mentioned above. They have bought hook, line, and sinker. They have begun down that road of destruction. Their lives are beginning to show the signs of following bad theology. Their relationships are beginning to unravel. They have to be stopped...for their own sakes.

Notice the verb "*snatch*". It indicates a swift, stronger hand of action. It seems to call for a more energetic approach lest these individuals get so deep into their deception they cannot be rescued. Obviously the mercy given in the last description is not thrown out the window. It is still implemented. Love and respect must still be shown...at every level of evangelism. But the actions described here are different. There is a sense of urgency...they are about to be burned really bad and we are to pull them quickly from the fire. We don't know what the "*fire*" stands for in this verse. It might mean the

punishment of God or it might mean the terrible consequences, here and now, that their sin is producing in their lives.

And a third level of indoctrination is described by the phrase, *to others show mercy, mixed with fear—hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh.* - This verse probably described the most hardened teacher whose lifestyle was saturated with the filth and perversion produced by years of unrighteous living. This person had built up so many layers of deception that stood between himself and the Truth. He had exchanged the truth for a lie for so long and had persuaded so many others to follow this wicked way. This person's heart was hardened by years of sin...by the arrogance of his own reputation...by the devastation he has brought into the lives of others...by the thousands of times he had pushed down his own conscience to keep it quiet until it rarely tries to correct him anymore.

The one who would attempt to rescue him is instructed to show mercy *"mixed with fear."* To shed light at the level this fallen individual would need would also mean that the believer would have to spend large amounts of time treading through false doctrine in order to defeat and convince with Truth. This he should do while cautiously and carefully guarding his own heart, mind, and soul.

Inside this believer must exist a heart filled with love, mercy, and caution and at the same time a holy heart that despises sin and its corrupting and destroying nature (*hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh.*) It would seem this level of evangelism should only be attempted by those who are grounded firmly in their faith and in a mature knowledge of God's Word.

### **WHAT DO WE DO WITH IT?**

Several principles and applications spring to my mind as we finish verse 22-23.

- No one, even the worst heretic, is too far gone that Christ cannot save him.
- We are to be intentional about our efforts to see others saved.
- The Christian's heart must not be bent on destruction but on trying to save humanity.
- Mercy will spring from the heart that is like Jesus.
- Evangelism is not a cookie cutter program. It must be approached with the fruit of the Spirit (mercy) and must begin with where the lost person is at.

- We can love and treat with respect a person and at the same time despise their sin and the destruction it is causing in their lives.

What are our attitudes and actions toward the unsaved like today?  
...toward those deceived by contemporary false teachers and cults?  
...toward those who are doing the deceiving? Many times these individuals will tell us that they are closer to God than we are.

They will belittle our "old fashioned" beliefs. They will claim new revelation from God. They will influence people that we love and care for. In this context...can we approach them with real love and mercy?

Do our attitudes and actions match what we've learned from God today? If not, please go to the Father and don't leave that time of prayer until you have His heart for the lost.

*Pastor Will*

## The Letter from Jude

*<sup>24</sup>To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy—<sup>25</sup>to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen. (Jude 24-25)*

### **WHAT DOES IT SAY?**

#### I. To him

- A. who is able to keep you from falling
- B. who is able to present you before his glorious presence without fault
- C. who is able to present you before his glorious presence with great joy

#### II. To the only God our Savior

- A. be glory
- B. majesty
- C. power
- D. authority
- E. through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen

### **WHAT DOES IT MEAN?**

Jude ends his letter with a soul stirring description of God. It is as if he is giving his original readers a glorious reminder. His entire letter has been intense. He has called them to defend the faith. He has told them how to recognize the enemies of the faith. He motivates them by going into great detail describing the awful eternal fate that awaits those who misrepresent God and His Gospel.

He then tells his readers that they have a responsibility to not only protect themselves and others from the influence of these false teachers but he tells them that they should be concerned and try to win the souls of the false teachers and everyone they have already influenced. No pressure guys...

And now...he reminded them of an incredible Truth. This "reminder" is in the form of praise. Let's take it phrase by phrase. <sup>24</sup>*To him who is able...* - Wow, what a statement! Right in the midst of Jude's strong expectations upon his readers he reminds them that they are not able but God is able. Three times in the New Testament praise is given to the God "Who is able".

In Romans 16:25 Paul gives praise to the God who is able to strengthen us. In Ephesians 3:20 Paul gives praise to the God who is able to do far more than we can ever ask or even dream of. And now, Jude praises the God who is able *...to keep you from falling...* - The word "*falling*" is the word *aptaistos* which means to stumble, slip, or fall into error. Listen to what Jude is saying. This God we love and serve can keep us from falling...from stumbling...from slipping away...from falling into error. He is faithful. He stands ready to give us all we will need to secure the spiritual victory in our own lives.

If we fall into sin, we cannot blame God. It could have been avoided. There was no need for it because God is the God who is able to keep us from falling. He is also able to *...present you before his glorious presence without fault...* - The phrase "*without fault*" is *amonmos*. It is a sacrificial word and was commonly used to describe an animal which was without spot or blemish and therefore would be fit to be offered to God. Notice the order of the words in this verse. He is able to present the sacrifice (us) to himself without fault. The amazing thing is that when we submit ourselves to God, his grace can make our lives nothing less than a sacrifice fit to offer him.

Notice also that he is able to present us to himself *...with great joy-* This term literally means "a wild joy...a leaping with joy." We are not sure if it speaks of God's joy or ours. My sense is that it is both. God expresses great joy when we obey and continue in the faith until the end. God is happy when we choose His Truth over the lies of the world...when we walk in His Truth even when everyone else around us (at work, school, or our home) refuses to do so. We will be overcome with joy when we finally stand before him and enter what he has prepared for us. It will be worth it all...all the hard times...all the persecution...all the ridicule...all the pressure...all the sacrifice.

<sup>25</sup>*to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord...* - Jude is saying that to this God who is able to keep us in the "here and now" and then one day present us safely in heaven, he must ascribe high and lofty words of praise. In a beautiful, somewhat poetic way, Jude honors our God by highlighting His glory

*(the sum of all the divine attributes of God as they radiate from His person), His majesty (the great and magnificent presence of God), His power and authority (His unparalleled strength, right to rule and His sovereign authority over all of creation). All of this is revealed to us through His Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Paul said in Colossians 1:19, "For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him (Jesus)..."*

Notice the description of "*Savior*" given to the Father. We usually associate the word Savior with Jesus but here Jude calls the Father our Savior. Several other NT writers do this too (Luke 1:47, 1 Timothy 1:1; 2:3; 4:10; Titus 1:3; 2:10; 3:4). Behind all this mess of bad theology and false teachers and the heartbreak of watching people we love become deceived...is a God who is called Savior...who loves us with an indescribable love...and whose love we will be going directly to one day.

*...before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.* - May this declaration and realization happen in front of all who have ever lived and who will ever live. So be it, it is final.

### **WHAT DO WE DO WITH IT?**

1. Wow! My heart is full this morning with Jude's words. They lift my spirit out of my pressure...my deadlines...the expectations of others. When I compare the stuff in my life that makes it difficult with the description of God that Jude gives...there is no comparison. God is awesome! The God we serve is filled with glory...exuberates majesty...has unequalled power to do whatever pleases Him...and is the absolute authority over all His own creation.

I am so grateful that years ago, He revealed Himself to me. He sent some wonderful people into my life to tell me the great Truth of His Gospel...how He loved me...how He took the punishment do me upon Himself...how He died on a cross...rose from the dead the third day...ascended to the Father...and intercedes for me.

I am so thankful for faithful people who gave me the Gospel story just the way they had been given it. They were entrusted with the faith and were faithful to live it and give it away. They were Rev. Bob and Caroline Wilson and their wonderful daughters Patricia, Bobi, and Anita. Thank you for your faithfulness. Now I'm entrusted with the faith. Am I faithful to live it? Am I faithful to give it away?

When you talk to the Father this morning, make sure you spend some time thanking Him for all those faithful people who were part of your coming to know Him. Thank Him for who He is and that you get to be related to Him (a son or daughter). And remember...no matter what temptation you will face today...He is able to keep you from falling and to keep you within this covenant until He presents you to Himself one day. What is our part? Do you remember from a few days ago?...*"Keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life."* (21)

May your day be filled with joy...and thanksgiving...and spiritual victory!

*Pastor Will*

Will Mackey  
Day 12

## **The Letter from Jude**

I know we “technically” finished Jude yesterday but I’m not quite sure we can wrap our minds around it yet. It was different wasn’t it? It had a tone and an urgency to it that was very different from other studies we’ve done.

Jude forced us to think about things differently than perhaps we were used to. He brought in front of us ideas like defending the faith, ungodliness masquerading as if it were godliness, carnal selfish pride, and judgment/eternal damnation. Jude called evil...evil and purity...purity. He did not mix words. He strongly evaluated the condition and issued strong rebuke and condemnation. He insisted the true believer take action.

Now that we have studied this letter verse by verse, it will be advantageous for us to see it as a whole unit again. I think we will be able to better understand Jude’s full purpose in writing it.

### **PROBLEM:**

Ungodly men, pretending to be godly, had worked their way into the spiritual leadership of a particular community of faith. What they taught and how they lived disrespected God’s Gospel and Truth. Jude sees these men as the enemy...as those who are used by Satan to destroy people’s ability to know God’s Truth. Jude wrote a letter to this group of churches giving them instructions from God.

### **WHAT TO DO:**

Jude is calling believers to defend God’s Truth upon which our whole faith rests. His letter consists of 2 spiritual battle plans: an offensive plan and a defensive plan.

The offensive plan is to be put in place to score against the enemy by exposing his lies and message so he can not so easily deceive people. The defensive plan is to be put into place to strengthen the believers so they will have the faith and wisdom to defeat their enemy and keep him from scoring (deceiving others).

### **The Offensive Plan is 4 fold:**

1. In order to effectively protect the integrity of the faith and make the enemy vulnerable, the early Christians must realize that this job is entrusted to them. (verse 3)
2. In order to effectively protect the integrity of the faith and make the enemy vulnerable, the early Christians must learn to recognize and expose the enemy's messengers. (verses 4a, 5-19)
3. In order to effectively protect the integrity of the faith and make the enemy vulnerable, the early Christians must learn to recognize and expose the enemy's message. (verse 4b)
4. In order to effectively protect the integrity of the faith and make the enemy vulnerable, the early Christians must learn to see the enemy's messengers and those they influence through the redemptive eyes of Christ. (verses 22-23)

### **The Defensive Plan is 4 fold:**

1. To strengthen and increase their faith, the early Christians must learn to intentionally train their hearts and minds in the faith. (verse 20)
2. To strengthen and increase their faith, the early Christians must learn to pray in the strength, discernment, and wisdom of God's Spirit. (verse 20)
3. To strengthen and increase their faith, the early Christians must learn to make choices that keep themselves within the boundaries of God's loving will and direction for their lives. (verse 21)
4. To strengthen and increase their faith, the early Christians must learn, in life and in spiritual warfare, to rely completely upon the mercy, glory, majesty, power, and authority of Jesus Christ. (verses 21, 24-25)

### **THAT'S BETTER:**

Now I feel a little better. The entire letter makes more sense now, doesn't it? It does help to use what we learned in the verse by verse study to look at the whole letter again. We can see the patterns of thought and purpose more clearly. We can bring all the pieces together and see Jude's entire intent for writing this letter.

Well...what are you going to do with what you learned in this study? It seems to me that we must learn the very same lessons that the early Christians had to learn. The 4 offensive principles and the 4 defensive principles are just as much for us today as they were for the believers back then.

We are surrounded with false teachers and false teaching. Our culture is saturated with so many lies...so many religious perspectives other than God's Truth given us by the Apostles...those who walked and talked with Jesus.

Do you realize it is your job to defend the faith...to protect its integrity... to declare it truthfully to those who don't know or to those who have it wrong? Maybe you are tempted to think that job belongs only to pastors or professors. It belongs to all of us...all of us who have been entrusted with the Gospel (the faith).

Simple question - Have you been trustworthy with it? Do you understand it enough to be able to explain it... to correct (in love) someone's false beliefs about it? If not...why not? How long have you known the Gospel? Less than a year? OK...I'll give you a little break ☺. More than a year? Three to five years? Ten years or more? If you can't explain the Gospel by now, you really don't have an adequate excuse. It is time for you to get serious about your faith.

May I encourage you to go through each of the 8 principles that God, through Jude, taught us over the last few weeks. Ask God to help you learn those things and apply them to our own life. Perhaps you should go to your pastor and ask him for help in learning how to defend the faith. Or why don't you take a college class at a Bible College (on campus or online) that can help you learn the faith and how to defend the faith.

Remember what James taught us in his study. He said that we should not be hearers of the Word only, but also doers of the Word (James 1:22-25). If we will be people who do the Word... we will be blessed.

I'm praying for you today!

*Pastor Will*