

Contending for the Faith

Introduction to Jude

Jude 1:1

Introduction

Today we are going to begin a series of messages on the Epistle of Jude. Often shortened to just Jude, the letter was written as an open letter to be read to many of the New Testament churches. It found its place as the penultimate book of the New Testament or second to the last book of the Bible.

According to verse 1, Jude was the brother of James, often called James the Just. Both Jude and James were brothers of Jesus. However, instead of claiming family heritage, they both claimed to be servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. Both Jude and James emphasized the deity of Jesus rather than his humanity and confessed they were followers of Jesus as the Messiah and God.

The letter of Jude was written around A.D. 66–69. The theme of the letter is an appeal to “Contend for the Faith” even in times of apostasy. It is a brief letter of only 25 words, yet they resonate with profound insight and passion.

According to his own words, Jude’s message is not the one he originally intended to write. It seems the Holy Spirit invaded his thoughts and caused him to switch his focus to a much different subject and very needed instruction. Jude’s writing gives us a vivid account of a coming apostasy and a warning to protect and defend the Christian faith.

The word apostasy means to renounce your faith or abandon a previous loyalty; to defect. In 2 Thessalonians 2, Paul writes, “Let no one in any way deceive you, for the coming of the Lord will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction” (2 Thessalonians 2:3) A great apostasy will be a sign of the end times and the soon return of Jesus Christ.

Jude urges his readers to remember the words of the apostles and calls upon them to defend the teachings of Jesus. He challenges his readers to how, even after God saved his people and brought them out of the land of Egypt, he did not hesitate to destroy those who fell into unbelief. He echoes the words of Peter that there would be “mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts. Jude realizes that not only are some are abandoning their faith in Jesus, but they are also trying to get other believers to do the same.

Persecution comes from without, but apostasy comes from within. Jude sees the church under fire from apostasy within the church. After the martyrdom of early apostles, several apostate leaders maneuvered their way into prominent leadership roles within the church.

A 3rd-century Christian leader named Arius was one of them. He received his training in Antioch but moved to Alexandria, Egypt, where he abandoned the

traditional teachings of the apostles. By the early 4th century, his teachings were condemned as heresy by the Church. Arius denied the divinity of Jesus. He taught "The Father existed before the Son and that there was a time when the Son did not exist. He taught that the Father created the Son. Therefore, although the Son was the highest of all creatures, he was not of the essence of God." Arianism was an outright attack on the doctrine of God and a challenge to the very foundation of Christian faith based upon Jesus as truly God. Arius taught that Christ was "of like substance" but not "of the same substance" as God the Father.

The church father, Athanasius, opposed Arius at the Council of Nicaea, and the Council excommunicated Arius. However, that did not deter Arius from continuing to spread his false teachings. But the famous Nicene Creed was the outcome of the Council of Nicaea.

Jesus referred to apostates in Mathew 15. He said, "Let them alone (or stay away from them); they are blind guides of the blind. And if a blind man guides a blind man, both will fall into a pit." (Matthew 15:14)

One commentator writes, "... for it has never yet been known to fail that one fool, when he goes astray, takes several others with him." – Soren Kierkegaard

Jude begins his letter with this greeting, "Jude, a bond-servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, To those who are called, sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ: Mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you." ([Jude 1:1-2 NKJV](#))

I. Bond-Servant of Jesus Christ

Both James and Jude begin their writings declaring that they are servants of Jesus Christ. Jude adds that he is a bond-servant. A bond-servant is a slave. An indentured servant is more or less a person who is working off a debt. An indentured servant is under contract until he pays the debt in full.

A bond-servant is a slave bound in service without wages and owned by his master. We are still suffering the effects of slavery in America today almost 150 years after President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation. Considering the racial tensions we're facing today, Jude makes an incredible claim. Jude had so much respect and love for Jesus that he was honored to be his slave and call him his Master and Lord.

This is how he begins his letter, "Jude, a bond-servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, To those who are the called, beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ: May mercy and peace and love be multiplied to you." (Jude 1-2)

The name "Jude" is a shortened form of Judas, meaning "praise YHWH." Jude identifies himself as a "brother of James," which narrows the field concerning who the writer really is. There are eight men named Judas in the New Testament, but only two are associated with a man named James. They are the apostle Jude and Jude, the half-brother of Jesus. The apostle Jude can be eliminated since he

was the son of a man named James and not a brother of Jesus, according to Luke. (Luke 6:16; Acts 1:13). In this letter, Jude doesn't identify himself as an apostle or even make a distinction between himself (v. 17) and the apostles who held that special authority.

That only leaves us with Jude, the half-brother of Jesus as the most likely candidate. So why didn't he use the name "Judas," the name he is referred by in Matthew 13:55. We don't really know. Maybe it was because he didn't want to be confused with Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Jesus. We do know that during Christ's earthly life, Jude and James did not believe Jesus was the Messiah. In John Chapter 7 it says, "His brothers said to Him, "Leave here and go into Judea, so that Your disciples also may see Your works which You are doing. "For no one does anything in secret when he himself seeks to be known publicly. If You do these things, show Yourself to the world." For not even His brothers were believing in Him." (John 7:3-5)

But after the Resurrection, Jude calls himself a bond-servant of Jesus. What caused Judas to believe? Belief in the Resurrection changes you! Before Resurrection faith, you only focus on this life. But after you come to believe in the Resurrection, it opens up eternity before you!

The word bond-servant in the Greek is *doulos* means, one who is solely committed to another. To be under someone's total control, a male slave in a socio-economic environment. Even though he was the half-brother of Jesus, Jude preferred not to flaunt his earthly relationship to Jesus. Instead chose to identify himself as a slave of the Heavenly Messiah.

In the Greco-Romans world, slavery was widespread, and most slaves were not held in high esteem (to put it mildly). To be owned as a slave was not what you would call a great ambition in life. And yet, Jude says he is under the total control of the Christ. The apostates that he speaks of later sought to gain power and authority over people and were certainly not interested in being servants. They may have given lip-service to Jesus as their Master, but with their actions, they denied Christ.

Jude was not the only bond-servant in the early church. It was a common thread among the early believers and Christian leaders. In Acts 4 after the magistrates threatened the disciples, they said, "And now, Lord, take note of their threats, and grant that Your bond-servants may speak Your word with all confidence," (Acts 4:29)

To the Romans, Paul writes, "Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God" (Romans 1:1) And he tells Timothy, "The Lord 's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged," (2 Timothy 2:24) Even in the Revelation, John writes, "And a voice came from the throne, saying, "Give praise to our God, all you His bond-servants, you who fear Him, the small and the great." (Revelation 19:5)

To call Jesus “Christos,” “Messiah,” or “The Anointed One,” was to make a theological claim that He is the Messiah long expected by the Jews.” After the Resurrection, when Jesus appeared to his brothers, they became Christians and believed Jesus was the Messiah.

The Lord’s brother, James, became the leader of the Jerusalem council and wrote the epistle of James. Josephus record that James was martyred in A.D. 62 by being thrown from the top of the temple and then stoned. His coffin was found in 1955, and the inscription reads, “James, son of Joseph, brother of Jesus.” Jude was also martyred for his faith in Christ.

We don’t know exactly who the recipients of Jude’s letter were, but they most likely were Jewish believers.

II. Those Who Are Called

Jude says he is writing to those who are the Called. What is the “call of God” that Jude mentions? In one sense, the Apostle Paul says that every non-Jewish believer is called. In Romans 1:6, he writes, “And you also are among those Gentiles who are called to belong to Jesus Christ. (Rom 1:6 NIV)

Even the Apostle Peter says that, “Christ’s divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. (2Pe 1:3 NIV)

God planned all of his promises and blessing to come upon the whole human family before time began. And in this sense, everyone has been called to partake of God’s saving grace

Unfortunately, not everyone accepts God’s way. The apostle Paul wrote, “but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.” (1Co 1:23-24 NIV)

While God intended the call to be universal, because of free-will and sin, many have not heard the call or have refused the invitation. The Bible calls those who accept God’s invitation of salvation through the sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross, the church! That doesn’t make us the elite or better than others. But it does make us the redeemed, and those who have chosen Christ and become the called-out ones to share the message of God’s love and forgiveness with others.

III. The Beloved of God

Jude also calls Christians “beloved in God the Father.” It is for this reason Satan (and those who follow him) despise Jews and Christians. Those who don’t feel accepted and beloved very often lash out at those who do have a sense of security and peace. Satan’s anger and pride have been focused against God’s love and grace ever since he could not overthrow God and establish himself as God.

Consequently, he continues to lash out against those who choose God's ways and are beloved in God the Father.

In Deuteronomy 7 Moses told the people, "The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but because the Lord loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the Lord brought you out by a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt." (Deuteronomy 7: 7-8)

God intended His blessings to be for everyone, not for just a few. And even though sin marred God's plan for us, Peter says, "The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead, he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. (2Pe 3:9 NIV)

God wants you to live a blessed life! And that is what will happen when you choose to follow Jesus and make Him the Master of your life! Those who choose Jesus experience the peace of God. Those who refuse Christ end up at war with God, just like Satan.

Many people are angry with God because they can't replace him and be their own God. And so they try to eradicate those who remind them of this through persecution and even martyrdom. We see the outcome of this kind of hostility and anger when Jesus enters this world. He heals, encourages, restores, uplifts, comforts, and cares for people without discrimination, preference, remuneration, or recognition, and yet he is hated, despised, rejected, and crucified. And the Bible says this kind of hostility will intensify until Jesus returns to the earth and defeats Satan and his followers.

But Jude says not to worry because we are kept for Jesus Christ. The Greek meaning of that word kept is to retain or keep watch over, to guard. Believers are the called, beloved in God reserved, preserved, and kept by the power of Almighty God.

Casting Crowns wrote a song called East to West.

"I know you've washed me white,
Turned my darkness into light.
I need your peace to get me through,
To get me through this night.
I can't live by what I feel, but by the truth your word reveals.
I'm not holding on to you, but you're holding on to me,
You're holding on to me."

Always remember that God loves you and wants to bless you and will keep his hand upon you no matter what you must face when you choose to follow his Son, Jesus.

Conclusion

In verse 2, Jude says, "Mercy, peace, and love be yours in abundance." (Jude 1:2 NIV)

Mercy is kindness or concern expressed for someone in need. It provides relief from the misery of sin. Peace is a state of unity or harmony and provides relief from the chaos of sin. Love is a state of deep unconditional affection and favor and provides relief from the fear of sin's consequences.

In these 25 verses, Jude contrasts true believers and apostates. He says:
Believers are beloved; apostates are rejected.
Believers are kept for glory; apostates are kept for destruction.
Believers experience mercy; apostates experience no compassion.
Believers experience peace; apostates experience turmoil.
Believers experience love; apostates will experience God's wrath.
Believers are bond-servants of God; apostates are slaves of the Devil.
Believers acknowledge God as their Father; apostates have the Devil as their father.

Jude admonishes us to contend for the faith! Don't be intimidated or afraid to defend the gospel – the good news about God's love revealed in Jesus Christ.

"Jude, a bond-servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, To those who are the called, beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ: May mercy and peace and love be multiplied to you." (Jude 1-2)