

## Contending for the Faith

### The Believer's Defense

#### Jude 17-19

### Introduction

Beginning with verse 17, Jude tells us how to combat apostasy. "But you, beloved, remember the words which were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ:" (Jude 1:17 NKJV)

Amplified Bible - But you must remember, beloved, the predictions which were made by the apostles (the special messengers) of our Lord Jesus Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed One).

Jude uses the phrase "But You must remember" to change directions as he shifts the focus from the denouncing apostates to exhorting true believers. After identifying the apostates in expressive language, Jude gives the believers guidelines on how to avoid the error of these apostates. It is not enough to recognize false teachers; you must also avoid falling for their errors in their teachings.

Up to this point, Jude has exposed and condemned the evil ones who have infiltrated the churches. But, now, his goal is to provide the faithful believers with a strategy to combat these apostates effectively. The term "beloved" describes those who are dear to God and loved by Him in a very special relationship. In the first 16 verses, Jude focuses his attention on the problem. Now he turns his attention to the believers.

Jude presents believers with a strategy for combat. He calls upon them to be aware of apostasy the apostles warned them about, to grow in spiritual maturity in the midst apostasy, and to reach out with the message of hope and salvation to those who have been affected by these false teachers. Peter's Second Epistle deals with false teachers. Several times he calls his readers to remember. In 2 Peter 1:12, he writes, "For this reason, I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding *you*," (2Pe 1:12-13 NKJV)

In 2 Peter 3:1 he writes, "Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in *both of* which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder), that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior," (2Pe 3:1-2 NKJV)

Remember means to bring to mind or think of again. It means to keep in mind for consideration. Jude senses the need for a series of direct commands. You can know a lot of facts, but you must be able to recall the message of the Gospel to defend yourself against the destructive attacks of heretics. They must know that they can effectively oppose their adversaries with the Gospel, which has been preached by Christ's apostles." (Kistemaker)0

Jude is asking the saints to allow back into their mind God's truth and to keep their mind alert and attentive to those truths. There are people today who think it is "okay" to turn the grace of God into a license to practice immorality and use the teachings of Jesus to promote their causes. Jude says the best "weapon" against the lies of the ungodly is the truth of God's Word. Do you daily, recall to mind God's Word, allowing it to strengthen your faith. One of the best ways to strengthen your faith is to memorize and meditate upon the truth of God's Word.

When Satan came to tempt Jesus, he said, "It is written, 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE BY BREAD ALONE, BUT BY EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS FROM THE MOUTH OF GOD.'" (Mat 4:4 NKJV) The word "Word" is the word "Rhema," which means God-breathed! It is the Word that is alive!

There are too many spiritually anorexic Christians today! Anorexia is as dangerous spiritually as it is physically! It will kill you! If you don't feed on the Word of God every day, your spiritual life will suffer dramatically. Remember and review the teachings of Scripture and ask the Holy Spirit to give you a hunger and thirst for righteousness. The Apostle Paul writes to the believers at Corinth, "Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and keep the traditions just as I delivered *them* to you." (1Co 11:2 NKJV)

## **I. AN APOSTOLIC PREDICTION**

Jude tells us to remember the words spoken by the apostles. "But you, beloved, remember the words which were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ:" (Jude 1:17 NKJV)

What words? Jude was one of the last books written (70-89AD), so the words Jude is referring to would include most of the New Testament; the Gospels, Paul's letters, and Peter's letters. Jude views the writings of the apostles as inspired prophetic writings. They are important because they repeatedly warn believers of false teachers who oppose the Gospel. Jesus said in Matthew 15, "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves." (Mat 7:15 NKJV)

Paul wrote to Timothy, "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, *because* they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn *their* ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables." (2 Timothy 4:3-4 NKJV)

Warren Wiersbe writes, "I read somewhere that the Great Wall of China was penetrated at least three times by the enemy, and each time it was because the guards were bribed! A strong defense depends on strong people. If the Church is to oppose and defeat the false teachers, then all of us in the Church must be strong and able to "stand against the wiles of the devil."

The words spoken beforehand were prophetic predictions which have an abiding validity and value. They are the words of Old Testament prophets, the words of

Jesus, and the writings of the apostles. In Matthew 24:25, Jesus said, "Behold, I have told you in advance." In Mark 13:23, he says, "But take heed; behold, I have told you everything in advance." Luke writes in Acts 1:16, "Brethren, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit foretold by the mouth of David concerning Judas who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus." The Apostle Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 7:3, "I do not speak to condemn you, for I have said before that you are in our hearts to die together and to live together." Peter writes, "that you should remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken by your apostles." (2 Peter 3:2)

The word apostle literally means "sent one." It conveys the basic idea of mission. An apostle is one who is sent to do a job and has the authority to complete the assignment. The NT "definition" of an apostle of Jesus Christ was one who had seen the risen Messiah and was appointed by Christ to proclaim the faith in every community to which Christ sent him. He was Christ's ambassador and spoke with His authority. An apostle (1) belongs to the One who has sent; (2) is commissioned to be sent out; (3) and possesses the authority and power of the One who sent him.

Wherever there is the authentic, counterfeits usually appear, which happened in the early Church. False apostles and teachers began to appear, which made it necessary to develop a system to protect the Church against false prophecies and forged letters. Since Christ had committed "the faith" to His Apostles, one of the main tests in the early Church was, "Is this what the Apostles taught?" When the Church assembled the New Testament books, a requirement was that each book was written either by an apostle or by someone closely associated with an apostle.

Apostolic teaching was, and still is, the test of truth. If someone offers you a "new revelation," you should test it by what the Apostles wrote and by what Jesus Christ taught. How do we respond in an age when false teaching is so prevalent, and not all Bible teachers can be trusted?

Jude gives us some timely advice. First, we must remember the words of the apostles who wrote down the Word of God in the New Testament. They correctly predicted that false teaching would occur. So we shouldn't be overly discouraged or fearful when we see false teaching creep into the Church. It's a reality. Second, we are to grow in our understanding of God's Word because the Scriptures are fully authoritative and sufficient. The safest Christian is the one who has a desire to grow in the truth of the Christian faith. Third, Jude urges us to live a life of dependence on God and to be mindful of God's love for us—to dwell on it, to delight in it, to draw on it, and to be cheered on by it.

A person who is full of God's love is not vulnerable to a false teacher's sales pitch. We must respond to wrong teaching with grace and truth, reaching out with compassion and godly wisdom. We can rest in the power of God. He can keep us from falling away and present us faultless. It is God's truth that helps us resist what is false!

## II. THE APOSTOLIC WARNING

In verse 18, Jude says that the apostles "told you that there would be mockers in the last time who would walk according to their own ungodly lusts." ([Jude 1:18 NKJV](#))

The Amplified Bible says, "They told you beforehand, In the last days (in the end time) there will be scoffers [who seek to gratify their own unholy desires], following after their own ungodly passions."

The apostles repeated over and over the prophetic words of Christ urging believers to learn the ways of Christ. Repetition is one of the best forms of learning and memorization of what God is saying in His Word is the key to living the truth. Are you actively memorizing His Word?

Peter says, "Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts ([2 Peter 3:3](#)) What were the mockers mocking? Verse 4 makes it clear that false teachers ridicule and treat with contempt the Bible's repeated promise of Jesus' Second Coming, asking, "Where is the promise of His coming?"

Several of the Gospel writers use the phrase "in the last days." The last days is the time between the First and Second Coming of Christ. It is a period that overlaps with what most theologians refer to as the "church age." Scripture teaches that during this time, the forces of evil will become increasingly visible and audible. The "last time" refers to the end of the historical period that encompasses the church age and the Tribulation. After this "last time," God will rule upon the earth, first during the Millennium and then in the new heavens and new earth.

In the "last days," there will be many who will mock Christianity. The mockers are not ignorant of what the Bible says; they just don't believe it. Before Satan can substitute his lies, he must challenge the truth of God's Word and cast doubt upon it. Jude may have in mind those who mock the idea of Jesus' return. Or maybe he meant the kind of people who mock those who don't go along with their views that exclude God. Either way, mockers love to mock those who want to please God. Jude wants Christians to expect this kind of mocking so that they won't be surprised by it. The apostles warned that in the end times evil deceivers and mockers would come.

These evil deceivers always try to tear down godly leaders, pointing to their inconsistencies and personal faults as proof that their message is faulty. No Christian leader is perfect, and no follower of Christ is perfect. But the Word of God is always accurate and true.

The driving force behind the ungodly is their sinful lusts. They make up their own rules and deliberately reject God's warnings of judgment. They don't want God to tell them how to live. They wish to excuse and satisfy their sinful desires, and they don't want the Word of God condemning their selfish and immoral way of life. When

a person says, "I have intellectual problems with the Bible," they probably have a moral problem, and the Bible condemns what they are doing. Those who obey God's Word don't have a problem with it. Beware of religious impostors! The increase of ungodly and impious mockers is a sign that we are very near the "end times."

The Jerusalem Bible says that the ungodly follow nothing but their own desires for wickedness." These mockers are intent on experiencing the thrills of sin and new forms of ungodliness. A sinful person, when left to themselves, instead of gaining mastery over their base desires, are overcome by their evil cravings, which become the dominant force in their life.

Jude's apostates had two significant flaws. First, these false teachers believed that since the body was sinful and unredeemable, it was okay to indulge in sinful pleasures. And secondly, since God's grace could forgive any sin, it doesn't matter what sin you commit because God will forgive you. Add to this a third characteristic that these heretics believed they were advanced thinkers, and therefore the prudish and old-fashioned beliefs of the Church are no longer relevant.

There are a lot of people today who believe that the once-accepted standards of morality and fidelity, especially in matters of sex, are out of date and don't belong in our modern society. But remember this text from the Old Testament, "The fool says in his heart, There is no God" ([Psalm 53:1](#)).

Zwingli, the Swiss Reformer, wrote, "Jude foresaw the coming of mockers in the last time who by their deeds clearly have no hope, for they rage furiously and live shamelessly and desire inordinately and persecute arrogantly and seize and grasp everything that they can plunder or steal or gain. All these things are tokens of their godlessness and despair. Like their father, the Devil, they are harsh toward everybody, refuse the joy and consolation of salvation, and despise every warning that might turn them from error."

"Scoffers" choose to forget or ignore the fact that God has kept His Word in history and will do so again. God judged the world by the flood in Noah's day, and the world is scheduled for judgment again when Christ returns. So don't mock, but heed the warnings of the apostles.

### **III. THE APOSTATE'S WORLD VIEW**

In verse 19, Jude writes, "These are sensual persons, who cause divisions, not having the Spirit." ([Jude 1:19 NKJV](#))

The Amplified Bible - It is these who are [agitators] setting up distinctions and causing divisions—merely sensual [creatures, carnal, worldly-minded people], devoid of the [Holy] Spirit and destitute of any higher spiritual life.

Who are these false teachers? They are the ones who have no spiritual sense. Their senses are only related to this world. These are the ones who have

intellectually disavowed God, and in today's world has elevated science as God or above God. The Apostle Paul warned the believers at Ephesus that "Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves." (Act 20: 30 NKJV)

Sadly, we come in contact with people we like who begin to influence us with attractive ideas and words which lure us away from the Truth of God's Word. Warren Wiersbe says, "Their appeal is usually, "*We have a deeper knowledge of the Word that your Church doesn't have! We have a better understanding of prophecy, or the Christian life, than you do.*" They offer a "*higher quality*" religion than that of the Apostles."

They don't do this by accident. This is a choice of their will. Their goal is to divide Christians and sow doubt and confusion. Apostates are not uniters; they are dividers. False teachers engage in endless definitions which never leave people encouraged or strengthened. Instead, their words pit one group of people against another, stirring up hatred and discord. The purpose of apostates is to create schisms and factions, which is the common practice of people who proclaim heresies.

Sensual, in this context, describes the person who lives only for what they can get through their physical senses, and they live this way selfishly. Their motto is, "If it feels good, do it" or, "How can it be wrong if it feels so right?" Jude calls the teachers of error worldly people who do not have the Spirit.

James 3: 15 says, "*Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.*" (Jas 3: 13-18 NKJV)

Apostates follow their natural lusts and appetites without restraint or control. They sit in judgment of others while they will submit to no one. The Apostle Paul writes these words to the believers at Corinth, "But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned. But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is *rightly* judged by no one. For "WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD THAT HE MAY INSTRUCT HIM?" But we have the mind of Christ." (1Co 2: 14-16 NKJV)

In 2 Corinthians 2: 14, he says, "Now thanks *be* to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place. For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. To the one *we are* the aroma of death *leading*

to death, and to the other the aroma of life *leading* to life. And who *is* sufficient for these things? For we are not, as so many, peddling the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as from God, we speak in the sight of God in Christ." (2 Co 2:14-17 NKJV)

Paul distinguishes two kinds of people. Some are sensitive to and guided by the Holy Spirit, and others are guided only by their physical senses. A false teacher is one who lives as if there is nothing beyond physical life and whose values are all physical and material. A person like that cannot understand spiritual things. Their interests and goals do not go beyond this physical life. It is easy to become so involved in the world that we think there exists nothing beyond it. That is why we seek the mind of Christ. When he dwells within us, we are safe from the ever demanding material things of this life.

Jude says apostates are devoid of the Spirit. They pay lip service to faith but deny the faith by their actions. People of faith are guided by the Spirit, who breathes the breath of God upon the Scriptures and makes them come alive to your mind and heart. The Book of Revelation was revealed to the Apostle John when he was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day.

Every person either lives "in the Spirit" or "in the flesh." Those whose only sense of spirituality relates to the flesh grieve the Holy Spirit. The Apostle Paul says, "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you." (Eph 4:30-32 NKJV)

## **Conclusion**

When Jude uses the phrase "Devoid of the Spirit," he is talking about someone who is an unbeliever. A person can be very knowledgeable about the Bible and religious matters and still be an unbeliever. Some of those unbelievers are preachers and pastors! Those who boast they have spiritual insights and knowledge but are devoid of the Spirit are heretics and false teachers. They function on their own natural powers. All of their causes are aimed at bettering this physical world, which may seem spiritual, but under the scrutiny of God's light, always fall short.

The most significant cause you can ever be a part of is the cause of Christ, the cause of rescuing damaged persons from the despair of this world's failed promises. Money, education, materialism, rebellion, destructiveness, and every other cause will never fix the problem of human iniquity. God's love and salvation through the Cross of Jesus Christ is the only remedy for sin. The greatest cause in this world is the one of proclaiming God's love and grace as the solution to whatever damage this life has done to you! There is so much "religious showmanship" these days that even the saints are confused and deceived.

If ever there was a time when the Church needed discernment, that time is right now! How can we discern between what is "worldly" and what is "spiritual"? Only

those who know and understand the Scriptures can discern the difference. Worldly endeavors magnify the achievements of man, but spiritual endeavors magnify the Lord. When the Spirit is ministering through the Word, there is edification and spiritual understanding; but when the Natural is at work, it is merely "manufacturing" a ministry, of entertainment or, at best, intellectual education.

Only the Spirit of God can minister to our spirits and to make us more like Jesus Christ. The Church and the world truly need authentic spiritual disciples today. Unless what you are doing is led by the Spirit of God, it may be led by the spirit of delusion!

One last thought in this passage has to do with God's forgiveness. God chooses not to recall our sins to mind when we confess and repent of them. Satan does just the opposite. The Devil reminds you constantly of your sins and failures and even goes before God to accuse you of your sinfulness. He can be so convincing that even when you have confessed your sins, the Devil heaps guilt and shame upon you. James says to, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." ([Jas 4:7 NKJV](#))

Psalm 103 says, "God has not dealt with us according to our sins, Nor punished us according to our iniquities. For as the heavens are high above the earth, *So* great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; As far as the east is from the west, *So* far has He removed our transgressions from us. As a father pities *his* children, *So* the LORD pities those who fear Him." ([Psa 103:10-13 NKJV](#))

Read your Bible and meditate on God's love and forgiveness. And if the Holy Spirit convicts you of something that not's right, repent and ask God to forgive you, and keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. ([Jude 1:21 NKJV](#))