

Valley Bible Church - Bible Survey

Lesson 90, Introduction and Outline, the Book of Jude

Introduction:

As a teacher I know what it is like to enter class excited about a lesson plan, only to find a pressing problem that needs to be addressed first.

Jude fully intended to write a treatise on "common salvation," but found himself faced with an alarming rate of apostasy, or falling away, among the professing believers.

He writes, therefore, to encourage the church to "*contend earnestly for the faith*" and to unmask the villains who have "*crept unnoticed*" into the fellowship.

His argument was based on analogies from the past, a careful analysis of the current problem, and a consideration of an ancient prophetic announcement concerning latter-day departure from the faith.

Author:

The writer of this letter identifies himself very well:

He is the brother of James (v 1) who was the leaders of the Jerusalem church (Acts 15). That means he was one of the four half-brothers of Jesus (Matt. 13:55; Mark 6:3). Like his brothers, he rejected Jesus as Messiah (John 7:1-9) until after Christ's resurrection, when they all became believers.

Although his name in Greek was Judas, he was not Judas, the Apostle, who was, in fact, the son of James (Luke 6:16; Acts 1:13). The frequent use of the book in the early church along with their acceptance of his identity made it far less controversial than 2 Peter.

He and his brothers traveled on missionary trips, with their wives (1 Cor. 9:5), but he was at home and active in the church at Jerusalem and it is likely the letter was written from that city.

Audience:

No indication of the identity of the readers appears in the letter, though its intensely Jewish character strongly indicates that it was written for Hebrew Christians. It bears a strong resemblance to parts of 2 Peter.

Date:

The accurate dating of this letter is impossible since little evidence is available. Except for John, who lived to the close of the century, all other Apostles had been martyred.

The church was vulnerable to political persecution from Rome, and infiltration from pre-Gnostic false teachers who sowed a wide harvest of doctrinal error.

Even though many scholars believe that Jerusalem was still standing, all the information available presents us with a wide range of possible dates from A.D. 66-80, or perhaps even later.

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Purpose:

The purpose of the Book of Jude is clear. The letter was written to defend the apostolic faith against false teachers who were infiltrating the church. These men were certainly part of the developing Gnostic philosophy, but unlike the ones Paul attacked in Colossians who were ascetic, these were antinomian.

Antinomian thinking taught that everything material is evil, and everything spiritual is good. They cultivated their "spiritual" selves by ritual prayer, ceremonies, and study while allowing their "physical" selves to do anything to fulfill its natural, fleshly desires. This resulted in arrogant, self-righteous people who were, at the same time, guilty of all kinds of lawless immorality and greed.

Jude is writing to expose the villains who are leading believers into apostasy and immorality, and giving them direction for halting the advance of this dangerous heresy in the church.

I. PURPOSE (Verses 1-4)

Like the leader of any organized group that is being threatened, Jude wastes no time getting to his concern.

A. Salutation (1-2)

Jude identifies himself and addresses his letter to "the called;" all

Christians who have been called to the knowledge of God through Christ. They are the loved ones of God Himself, and are being kept for Jesus to gather at His coming.

B. Subject (3-4)

Jude's original topic was to be the salvation he shared with his readers, but then he learned that "*certain persons have crept in unnoticed, . . . ungodly persons*" (v 4). They were denying the person and work of Jesus and living wicked and immoral lives.

He had to point them out and urge the true believers to "*contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered to the saints*"(v 3).

He asked them to stand in support of the body of truth which had been passed on to them by the Apostles and other faithful teachers. If they did that, they would be able to live godly, obedient lives as they had been taught.

II. PROBLEM (Verses 5-16)

In order to "make his point" Jude began with three powerful illustrations from the Old Testament.

A. Past Analogies (5-7)

In each of these instances apostasy, or falling away, is followed by judgment:

1. Among Israel, after being delivered from Egypt, those who did not trust God lost their promise and were destroyed (v 5).

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2. The angels, who in pride rebelled, were put into eternal bandage, just waiting for their final judgment (v 6).

3. The cities of Sodom and Gomorra indulged in immorality and were punished by destruction of eternal fire (v 7).

The inference is clear. You are no different than Israel, or angels, or evil cities. Apostasy will not go unpunished and must not be allowed a place in the church.

B. Present Analysis (8-13)

Next he moved to an analysis of the apostasy creeping into the church, exposing its character. The movement was:

1. Presumptuous (5:8-10)

The false teachers were arrogantly defying God by their teaching and their behavior. They disclaimed the existence of angels simply because they did not understand them.

Even the Archangel Michael refrained from railing against the devil in a dispute over the body of Moses, but the apostates have no such humility. They are living filthy, immoral lives and yet they badmouth and blaspheme others far greater than themselves.

2. Perverted (11)

The present false teachers were materialistic and immoral.

That was nothing new, but was the same type of perverse rebellion against God as had been shown by three men in the past, Cain, Balaam, and Korah.

Cain founded a new religion based on his own works and resulting in murder. Balaam prostituted his divine gift for wealth even serving God's enemies. And, Korah led a rebellion against the spiritual leadership of Moses and Aaron.

3. Pretentious (12-13)

These men were like magicians, all smoke and mirrors. They pretended to be a part of the fellowship with its best interests in mind, but they were bringing trouble and death.

They were hidden reefs, waterless clouds, fruitless trees, dangerous waves, directionless stars. All showy but destructive.

C. Future Announcement (14-16)

Enoch, who lived in the days before the flood and watched the growth of a great apostasy, actually foresaw that the coming of the Lord at the end of the age would be preceded by a major apostasy from the true faith.

Enoch faithfully warned about this coming apostasy. This prophecy appears to be quoted from the non-canonical, Apocryphal Book of Enoch 1:9, which is thought to be written a century or more before the birth of Christ. The original prophesy given by Enoch is recorded in Genesis 5:19-24.

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III. PROTECTION (Verses 17-25)

Jude brings his short letter to a close by pointing his readers to their surest defense, the Word of God.

A. Defense (17-23)

The Word of God is a sure source of information on all apostasy.

God was not taken by surprise, in fact, the apostles had already warned against the divisiveness and spiritual emptiness of the coming teachers (vv 17-19).

Jude encourages his readers to keep themselves in the love of God, build themselves up in faith through prayer and obedience with the help of the Holy Spirit (vv 20-21)

They were also to help convince wandering believers who needed to experience divine mercy and wisdom to avoid contamination.

B. Doxology (24-25)

Jude ends with one of the most powerful benedictions in all of Scripture. It is, really, a potent part of his message because it guarantees the true believer that he will be kept from stumbling and presented blameless to Jesus Christ by the power of the almighty God.

Lessons:

Jude's warnings need to be heeded today and we must:

1. Contend earnestly for the faith.
2. Seriously examine every person's teaching by the Scripture.
3. Be filled with the Holy Spirit so as to be obedient and sensitive to truth and error.
4. Help to convince doubters to walk in the way of salvation and obedience.