

THE BOOK OF JUDE – THE ACTS OF THE APOSTATES

Part 1- INTRODUCTION

“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. Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints. For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.” (Jude verses 1-4 nasb)

The beginning of the Church Age is recorded in the Book of The Acts of The Apostles. The end of the Church Age is described in the Book of Jude which has been called the Acts of the Apostates.

The Acts of The Apostles relates to the deeds and teachings of godly men; the Acts of the Apostates relates to the deeds and teachings of ungodly men. The Book of Jude, although small in size, makes a great contribution to the New Testament Scriptures for Jude is the only New Testament book dealing exclusively with apostates and apostasy.

The individual believer and the church corporately, cannot afford to ignore the truth in this book. Let us begin our study of this book by being introduced to its author. Who is this Jude whose name the book bears?

The Writer of The Book.

The author is Jude who identifies himself in the first verse as *“Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James.”* The name “Jude” is “Judah” in Hebrew and “Judas” in Greek. It was a very common name in New Testament times and there are eight different persons named “Judas” in the New Testament.

Jude’s brother is more well-known than he is for James was the pastor of the church at Jerusalem and author of the Epistle of James. James is called *“the Lord’s brother”* in Galatians 1:9. That means that Jude was one of the four half-brothers of the Lord Jesus mentioned in Matthew 13:55 – *“Is not this the carpenter’s son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas?”* Jude is but another form of “Judas.”

He calls himself *“a bond-servant of Jesus Christ.”* Initially, he and his brothers did not believe that Jesus was the Christ. In John chapter 7 we read, *“His brothers said to him, “Leave here and go to Judea, that your disciples also may see the works you are doing. For no one works in secret if he seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, show yourself to the world.” For not even his brothers believed in him.”* (John 7:3-5)

Jesus’ half-brothers, raised in the same home with him, seeing some of His miracles and

hearing about others, refused to believe that He was Messiah. The citizens of Nazareth did not recognize him for who He was either. When He went to the Synagogue in Nazareth to teach, Mark records that they asked, *“Isn’t this the carpenter? Isn’t this Mary’s son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren’t his sisters here with us?” And they took offense at him. Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor except in his own town, among his relatives and in his own home.” He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. He was amazed at their lack of faith.*” (Mark 6:3-6)

From a brother who was an unbeliever to a brother who humbles himself to call himself a *“a bond-servant of Jesus Christ”* must have taken a real work of God’s grace in his heart. What made the difference? What was the convincing proof that Jesus was who He claimed to be? It was the resurrection!

After the resurrection, when the disciples were gathered in that upstairs room again, we read in Acts 1:14 - *“All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.”* If only the boys had listened to their mother, Mary! She, of all the thousands of that day, knew more about Who Jesus was and why He had come. Now, two believing brothers, James and Jude, both write books that are included in the New Testament Scriptures.

The Recipients of The Book.

The book of Jude is a little book with a big message. It is addressed *“To those who are called, beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ. May mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you. Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.”* (vs.1-3)

There are several wonderful truths in these opening verses that we will concentrate upon in this introductory study. Note especially:

THE BENEFITS OF SALVATION or The Sovereign Grace Of God Exhibited

“.....to those who are called, beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ” (v.1)

Jude's letter begins and ends with very comforting words to Christians. Jude writes to those who have been:

a. “Called.”

This term is used throughout the New Testament, especially in the Pauline writings. For example: Romans 1:7 *“To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints.”*

And I Cor.1:23,24 *“We preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom*

of God.” (Other references: I Thess. 5:24; II Thess. 2:13, 14)

This “calling” refers, not to a general appeal for all to come to God, but to the exercise of God the Father’s divine prerogative in electing to salvation those whom He chooses. Jesus said, “*You did not choose me, but I chose you.*” (John 15:16)

Paul spelled out God’s plan of operation in the process of salvation in Romans chapter 8 as follows: *And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.*” (Rom.8:30)

“Called,” “justified,” “glorified.” If you are born again you can be assured that you are one of the “called” and “justified” and will be “glorified”! And all this by the sovereign grace of God.

b. “Beloved in God the Father.”

I recently heard a question asked by one Christian of another, “Did you come to God out of fear or out of love?” That is an interesting question. But no one of us came to God because we awoke one day and decided to come to Him. If we are one of His, we came to Him because He decreed that we should come to Him and therefore “called” us to Himself and He did so because He loved us! “*We love him, because he first loved us.*” (I John 4:19)

The original recipients of Jude’s letter, who were surrounded by apostates, no doubt found great comfort in knowing that they were loved by God. And so are we!

c. “and kept for Jesus Christ.”

The third benefit that Jude mentions in his introduction in verse 1 is that we are “kept” – that is, God not only initiates salvation but He preserves those whom He saves. Paul assured the Philippian Christians that “*I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.*” (Phil. 1:6)

Furthermore, Peter writes these words of assurance: “*who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*” (I Peter 1:5) That word “guarded” is a military term and means that a guard had been posted and that guard is God Himself!

God calls, God loves, and God keeps. We *are* called, *are* loved, and *are* kept! All three verbs stress the action of God. Jude is very eager to begin his little letter by stressing the security of the believer in God’s electing and preserving love.

Then at the end of his letter in verse 24 he says, “*Now to him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you without blemish before the presence of his glory with rejoicing, to the only God . . . be glory.*”

Notice, in verse 1 we are *kept* by God for Jesus Christ. And in verse 24 God is able to *keep* us from falling. Jude begins and ends the letter by assuring believers that God exerts his omnipotence to keep them from falling away from the faith. Therefore I know that he will keep me from falling away from the faith, for, as Paul wrote: “*He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.*” (Phil. 1:6)

THE BLESSINGS OF SALVATION
or
The Generous Blessings Of God Extended

“May mercy and peace and love be multiplied to you.” (v.2)

This trio of blessings occurs nowhere else in the New Testament in this arrangement. “Mercy” leads this parade of blessings.

a. “Mercy.” There are two aspects to mercy: mercy is God withholding judgment and the bestowing of compassion. In both the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New Testament the basic words for “mercy” are translated in our English Bibles as “kindness”, “goodness”, “gracious”, “compassion”, “loving kindness”, etc.

The best distinction between “grace” and “mercy” that I have seen was made by Dr. R. C. Trench. He was a bishop in England, Dean of Westminster Abbey, renown linguist, author of many Bible study books and a Greek scholar. He wrote in his book, *Synonyms of the New Testament* this brief but beautiful distinction between grace and mercy: “Grace removes guilt, mercy removes misery.” Grace is concerned for man as a guilty sinner; mercy is concerned with man as a miserable sinner.”

b. “Peace.” Peace is the ceseation of conflict. Because Jesus Christ paid the penalty for our sinful rebellion, *“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”* (Rom.5:1)

c. “Love.” The love of God preceded and was the fountain from which mercy poured forth to us providing the balm of peace.

Jude addresses his readers by pronouncing multiplied portions of this triad of blessings which they need, because of the sinister encroachment of apostates into their midst and the increasing days of the apostasy ahead.

THE BOND OF SALVATION
or
The Essential Provision Of God Explored

“Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.” (v.3)

a. Jude’s Intended Writings.

“Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation....”

The believers to whom Jude was writing, and indeed all believers, are bound together by the cords of the “*common salvation*” which we share. It is that which all believers have in common. The most interesting and important subject about which we can speak or write is the salvation which God has provided for sinners. Other subjects may be important, they may

challenge one's intellectual powers and tantalize our inquisitiveness but their importance and value are far inferior to the great salvation that God has provided.

The phrase "*common salvation*" is not found anywhere else in the New Testament, but it does have its parallel. In Titus 1:4 we read all of the "*common faith*" and in II Peter 1:1 the phrase "*like precious faith*."

In the New Testament the term "salvation" means the deliverance of sinners from the penalty, the power and ultimately the presence of sin. It is that heavenly gift that all of those whom he is addressing possessed. Therefore he calls it "*common*."

Those who are in the family of God do not share the same language, the same physical characteristics, the same level of education, the same social status, the same cultural classification or material blessings but we do have the most important commonality which is our salvation! It is the one essential necessary for entering into God's heaven.

b. Jude's Intense Warnings.

It is interesting to note that Jude intended to write to his recipients more fully about this bond that he and his readers shared but something happened which changed his mind. It seems that although Jude would rather have written about the "*common salvation*" he was constrained by the Holy Spirit to urge his readers to "*earnestly contend for the faith*."

These to whom Jude was writing were in extreme danger. Instead of focusing upon the salvation which they already had, he changed in mid-stream and warned them about a conflict in which they all must be involved – the preservation and perpetuation of the "*faith*" that was under attack.

The remainder of Jude's brief book is about the incursion, the invasion of apostates – those persons who, as he said, in verse 4, "*... have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.*"

The apostasy of Jude's day has worsened through the ages to our present day. There appears to be comparatively little emphasis, in current evangelical circles, on the existence and danger of apostates and apostasy because the focus in general is more upon extending the faith than defending the faith. Both are needed but there must be a balance.

"Eternal vigilance is the price of freedom." No where is this more true than in the defense of "*the faith once for all delivered to the saints.*" Let us protect, practice and propagate that faith.

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