

Jude: Series Introduction

Tonight I want to begin a journey through the little book of Jude. It is nestled between the epistles of John and the Revelation. It is a book that is often overlooked and rarely emphasized within the modern church. We are getting closer to the end of Revelation in our studies on Wednesday evenings, and I felt compelled to study this book in order to discover the wealth of truth that is found within its 25 verses.

If we are to fully understand the great truths within the text, we need to have an understanding of its **background** and its **theme**. Jude was written by Jude, the brother of James and our Lord, Jesus Christ. Most scholars agree that it was written around the time that Peter wrote his 2nd epistle. Since there is no mention of the fall of Jerusalem, most believe that it was written around 68-70 AD.

We cannot begin to imagine the extreme pressure the early church was under at this time. They were under severe attack from the Roman government who sought to stamp out this new found movement. But, the greatest obstacle that the early church faced was attacks from within. There was a growing movement of apostasy and false teaching arising in the church. This is the **theme** and focus of Jude, recognizing and dealing with the false teachings of the day. Consider the thoughts of John MacArthur on Jude. *“This book.....gets lost in the shadow of Revelation. But if there's any letter in the New Testament that the church today needs to hear, it's this one...it's this one. **The church today is weak and compromising and tolerant and shallow, unwilling largely to give biblical truth its rightful place and certainly disinterested, if not outwardly opposed to going to war to protect the truth.** The church today seems to have very little interest in defending the truth against all the assaults.”*¹ (Emphasis mine.)

On another occasion he said, *“Looking at the big picture further, the beginning of the church age is described in the Acts of the Apostles. The end of the church age is dealt with in Jude which might be called the Acts of the Apostates. Acts describes the deeds and teaching of men of God, through whom Christ began to build His church. Jude, the last epistle, relates the deeds and teachings of apostates who will do everything they can to destroy the truth until the end of the church. Jude is the only book in the Bible entirely devoted to discussing apostasy all the way out to the end of the church age. So these 25 verses are the vestibule to Revelation. Revelation tells us how Christ comes to bring it all to an end. Jude describes for us the battle for the truth that's going to go on until the very end.”*²

Clearly the church was in a struggle for its very survival. The apostates, who had infiltrated the church, seeking to poison the foundation of truth with false doctrine, had one goal and that was the demise of the church and the truth of the gospel. This is reflected in the key verses of Jude.

Jude 3-4 – Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. [4] For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, you might ask: Why should we worry about Truth? How can we benefit from the study of Jude?

Truth cannot be overemphasized in our faith. Without truth, we err into apostasy and false doctrine. Truth was clearly a priority to our Lord. Just prior to the crucifixion, Jesus' last words to Pilate dealt with truth! Jn.18:37-38 – Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice. [38] Pilate saith unto him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault at all.

We may not want to admit it, but the modern church is under such an attack. We face hindrances from the outside, but the greatest struggle we face comes from within our own ranks, brought about by those who seek to “water down” or outright deny the truth. Many today have abandoned the fundamental truths of our faith in an effort to appease the masses. It saddens me to admit, but the Baptist faith is in a struggle for truth.

It seems as if many no longer embrace the fact that we have absolute truth. Many believe that truth is relative, depending on particular situations or circumstances. They think that truth for them may or may not be truth for others. Truth is not something that varies. It does not change. Truth is absolute and we have that truth in our Lord and His blessed Word.

Even when it comes to salvation and acceptance into heaven, many are divided upon what is necessary to achieve eternal life. There is a vast movement in our day that teaches

and embraces universal religion and acceptance. They teach that man should worship God, however and whoever they perceive Him to be. They believe that all religions are basically good and they all lead to heaven, just by different routes.

Jude was teaching salvation by faith in the Lord and the apostates sought to defeat his message and teach false doctrine. We face the same struggles today. We are considered narrow minded and even extremist for declaring that Jesus is the only way to be reconciled to God and inherit eternal life.

If we abandon truth, there is nothing left to stand upon. I pray that we will open our hearts to God's Word and allow Him to speak to us. We need to understand the struggles we face and prepare ourselves to deal with this grave assault on our faith. The church and those who follow Christ are in a struggle for truth. It is a battle that we cannot afford to ignore and we certainly cannot afford to lose.

This struggle should come as no surprise to any of us. The Scriptures are full of admonitions and warnings concerning false teaching and the dangers associated with it.

- Jesus spoke of false teachers and their dangers in one of His first sermons, the Sermon on the Mount. **Mat.7:15 – Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.** He had just begun His ministry and already He was addressing apostates.
- While giving the Olivet Discourse which deals with future events, Jesus once again addressed this dangerous issue. **Mat.24:11 – And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. Mat.24:24 – For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.**
- Paul was aware of this danger and warned the church at Ephesus at his departure. **Acts 20:29-30 – For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. [30] Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.**
- **2 Pet.2:1-2 – But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. [2] And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.**

➤ 1 Jn.4:1-2 – Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. [2] Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: [3] And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.

These are just a few, but I think we see that the message is clear. We too face the dangers of apostasy in our day. As we study the book of Jude, I pray that the Lord will open our eyes to the dangers and prepare our hearts with courage to stand for His truth in these difficult and trying days.

¹ <http://www.gty.org/Resources/Sermons/scripture>

² ibid