

Day 190, Jude

by David Servant

Jude's epistle emphasizes the importance of contending for the faith and being holy, warning against the heresy of turning God's grace into a license to sin.

Scripture: Genesis 5:24, Deuteronomy 34:6, Matthew 7:15, Titus 2:12, Jude 1:3

Topics: "Contending For Faith", "False Teachings"

Description

David Servant preaches on Jude's urgent appeal to contend for the faith against false teachings that pervert God's grace into licentiousness and deny Jesus Christ as Lord. Jude warns about the consequences of abandoning holiness by citing examples of Israelites, angels, people of Sodom and Gomorrah, Cain, Balaam, and Korah. False teachers within the church are identified by their fruits of immorality, rebellion, arrogance, and division. Jude references apocryphal books to illustrate historical events, emphasizing the importance of discerning truth from inspired scripture.

Transcript

When Jude wrote this short epistle---assumed to be some time between AD 66 and 90---he was quite alarmed over a certain heresy that was creeping into the churches. The very gospel itself was being subverted by false teaching, and so Jude wrote an appeal to all true believers to "contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints" (1:3).

More specifically, false teachers who had "crept in unnoticed," were "turning the grace of God into licentiousness," and "denying our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ" (1:4). Because they had "crept in unnoticed," it seems unlikely that they were publicly and verbally denying the Lord. Rather, their false teaching about God's grace---which turned it into a license to sin---was tantamount to denying the Lord and Master. Obviously, the titles of Lord and Master denote a person of authority who should be obeyed.

This same heresy, of course, has crept in unnoticed in our day as well. God's grace, which Scripture says instructs us to "deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age" (Titus 2:12), has been turned into a license for sin. When preachers tell us that holiness is not part of the salvation equation, or that any teaching about obedience is legalism, or that it is impossible for a true believer to forfeit his salvation for any behavioral reason, we should be greatly alarmed. God's grace is being turned into licentiousness.

In quick succession, Jude lists some biblical examples that illustrate the necessity of holiness. Even though God delivered the Israelites from Egypt, most never entered the Promised Land because of sin (1:5). And there are angels who once resided in heaven who are now "kept in eternal bonds under darkness" (1:6). So one's current favor with God is no guarantee of one's future favor if one abandons obedience.

Jude also cites the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, sexual perverts upon whom God rained fire and brimstone; Cain, whom God judged for hatred and murder of his brother; Balaam, whose god was money; and the rebellious men of Korah, who, when the ground opened, were swallowed. All illustrate God's hatred of sin and the necessity of holiness if one is to have a relationship with Him.

The false teachers and their disciples could be, just as Jesus said, "known by their fruits" (Matt. 7:15-21). According to Jude, they were characterized by sexual immorality, rejecting authority, reviling angelic majesties, grumbling, fault-finding, following their own lusts, speaking arrogantly, flattering people for the sake of gaining an advantage, mocking and causing divisions (1:7-8, 16, 18-19). Yet they were within the church, "hidden reefs in your love feasts," love feasts being shared meals among the believers (1:12).

Interestingly, Jude quoted two apocryphal books---that is, books that have not been accepted as being inspired by the Holy Spirit and thus were not included in the Bible. The first quotation is found in 1:9, where Jude referred to the devil having a dispute about the body of Moses. According to the writings of some early church fathers, that incident was recorded in a book titled *The Assumption of Moses*, and in it the devil tried to claim Moses' dead body because he had once killed an Egyptian. Remember that, according to the record in Deuteronomy, no one knew where Moses' body was buried because God performed the funeral (Deut. 34:6). Perhaps arch angel Michael did the actual burying of Moses' body.

The other apocryphal quotation is found in 1:14-15, taken from *The Book of Enoch*. Enoch was the pre-flood man who "walked with God; and he was not, for God took him" (Gen. 5:24). He prophesied in the book of his name concerning the return of the Lord to earth to execute judgment on the ungodly.

So why did Jude use information from books that are uninspired? Jude was not endorsing those apocryphal books as being inspired by God, but was simply endorsing two passages as being historically accurate. Just because something is true doesn't mean it is inspired by God.

The main message today? Be holy.

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