

Sermon unto the saints of God assembled at Topeka – Sunday, October 27, 2019

Jude is one of the shortest books of the Bible – being comprised of merely one chapter. It delivers a powerful message of warning and call to sobriety amongst those who have a God-given belief on Christ and who therefore have a lively hope of their eternal salvation. There is a lot of good stuff for us in Jude (that we will get to), but one main subject of the epistle is false teaching – or the introduction of heretical doctrine into the church. This is a specific stripe of heresy that Jude warns of - that which enters into the body in secret – nearly invisibly. It is the introduction of false teaching that is largely unrecognized, at least at the time of its introduction. This bringing in of unsound doctrine into the bosom of the church is quite a bit different than the brands of false preaching that our darling brother Ben preached to us about recently. This heresy is not immediately recognized by the church *as* heresy but is instead largely embraced (at least at the time of its introduction) and is therefore of the most pernicious and mendacious sort. For today and next Sunday, Lord willing, let us take a closer look at this little epistle and see what it has for us in terms of our own walk with God. But first, a little background on Jude.

We get evidence of who is Jude is (or rather, which Jude) in the salutation:

Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called: - Jude 1

This Jude is the brother of James, and there was only one James in the early church who did not need additional information attached to his name when people spoke of him – James, the brother of Jesus. This is the same James whose pen was guided by the Holy Spirit of God to write the epistle that bears his name. After the birth of Jesus, Mary and Joseph had many other children, James presumably being the oldest son next to Jesus (and Jude the youngest), as often children were named in age order:

Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas?- Mt. 13:55

We know that James and his siblings did not believe Jesus was the Messiah during the time of His ministry on earth:

Now the Jews' feast of tabernacles was at hand. 3 His brethren therefore said unto him, Depart hence, and go into Judaea, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest. 4 For there is no man that doeth any thing in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou do these things, shew thyself to the world. 5 For neither did his

brethren believe in him. 6 Then Jesus said unto them, My time is not yet come: but your time is alway ready. 7 The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil. 8 Go ye up unto this feast: I go not up yet unto this feast; for my time is not yet full come. 9 When he had said these words unto them, he abode still in Galilee. 10 But when his brethren were gone up, then went he also up unto the feast, not openly, but as it were in secret. – John 7:2-10

And:

But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house. – Mk. 6:4

But after Jesus was crucified and rose again, He appeared unto James, His brother in the flesh, who then became imbued with saving faith in Christ.

For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; 4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: 5 And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: 6 After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. 7 After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. 8 And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. – 1Cor. 15:3-8

The expositors mostly agree, and with good scriptural logic, that this James is the Lord's brother, and not either James of the original 12 disciples, as they were both already mentioned in the chronology of those to whom the Lord appeared after His resurrection. (An interesting side note – if this is the case, and no one is mentioned more than once in this listing of witnesses, then there were well more than 13 apostles - or those who were both called and taught directly by Christ. And we know that the number is already more than 13 - the 12 plus Paul plus Jude and his brother James, who are all certainly apostles.) Barnes uses the supporting text of Galatians 1 to help form his take on this:

Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother. – Gal. 1:18-19

Barnes: *This James, the author of the epistle that bears his name, was stationed in Jerusalem. When Paul went there, after his return from Arabia, he had an interview with James, and it is highly probable that Paul would state to him the vision which he had of*

the Lord Jesus on his way to Damascus, and that James also would state to Paul the fact that he had seen him after he rose. This may be the reason why Paul here mentions the fact, because he had it from the lips of James himself.

And further scriptural evidence makes it clear that Christ's other brothers (and presumably His sisters) believed on him after his resurrection.

These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren. – Acts 1:14

It is also fairly clear that Jude, and probably James along with him (and perhaps even their wives) went on missionary journeys – acting in the roles of evangelists (even though James was also one of several elders at the church of Jerusalem).

Have we not power to eat and to drink? 5 Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas? 6 Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working? – 1Cor. 9:4-6

This is important, I believe – because the warnings that Jude ends up pronouncing are of an experiential nature. During his missionary travels to the newly-formed New Testament churches, it is probable that Jude and James (as well as Peter [Cephas]) saw first hand the kinds of false teachings and teachers that began to infest the churches, whose memberships were largely comprised of adults who had grown up in cultures steeped in all forms of pagan idolatry. Adding to that, there were other elements that contributed to ripening the environment for heretical teachings to be brought privily into the churches:

- There were apostate Jews who, in their pride, craved authority – and no doubt used their 'superior' historical and traditional knowledge of the scripture to attempt to leverage position in the fragile, newly-formed churches of Christ.
- Most of that region of the world was controlled by the Roman Empire – and the Greco-Roman culture largely thought Christians to be superstitious and ignorant. So culturally, there were a lot of competing social influences that could have been confusing to novice Christians.
- The beginnings of both Libertine and Gnostic religious philosophies in the 1st century AD, leading to their rise and prominence in the 2nd Century AD, saw many attempts to mix Christianity with their views in cleverly constructed arguments in order to get a societal foothold (a little more on libertines and gnostics next week).

These elements no doubt provided for a fertile environment for the nearly invisible introduction of heresy into the churches, under the guise of true Christian religion. And we see throughout all their writings that Paul, Peter, Jude and James warn of the introduction of such heretical teaching. Though we know that all words of scripture are expressly and divinely inspired by the Holy Spirit, we also see the operation of the Holy Spirit working in these men and women throughout the scripture – and having them go through the experiences that they then recount for our edification.

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Two other notes before we dig into the text. First, it should be pointed out to any who don't already know this or have conducted this investigation for themselves, that many of the ideas expressed in Jude are also expressed, in largely the same way, in 2 Peter Chapter 2. And while we see similarities between expressions running throughout the current of the scripture, the similarities between these two texts are remarkable. The ideas are not at all presented in the same order, nor is the language anywhere close to identical, but the ideas and phrasings presented are notably similar. I would strongly suggest you do this comparative study for yourselves sometime, if you haven't already. But for now, all I am going to do is this: whenever I give the text in Jude that we are going to take a close look at (not in this sermon, but in next Sunday's), I will also give the text of 2Peter 2 that contains a parallel idea as an end note so you can go back later and see the parallel structure and see what I am talking about (again, if you haven't already done this for yourselves). I will rarely refer to or read the 2Pet 2 text – although in a couple of instances I will, to amplify a point.

Second – and not that this is at all relevant to me, nor should it be – but there is a wide variety of 'scholarship' on the book of Jude – and you can find writings from 'Bible scholars' who seem to have some sort of a 'bias' against the epistle of Jude because it quotes from two writings that are not 'canonical'. (I spoke of one of these when I preached on brother Enoch a while back.) Such a view of this matter employs a silly, pretentious and specious argument. There are several 'non-canonical' writings or writers both referenced and quoted in scripture – most notably through Paul's pen, who either references or quotes:

- The Greek poet and philosopher Menander in 1Cor. 15:33 (whose text predates Paul by 400 years): ***“Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners”***.
- The Greek poet Epimenides is referred to and quoted in Titus 1:12: ***“One of themselves, even a prophet of their own, said, The Cretians are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies.”***
- The Greek poet Aratus, and his words, are referred to by Paul (through Luke’s pen) at Acts 17:28: ***“For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring.”***
- The epistle to the Church at Laodicea at Col. 4:16: ***“And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea.”***
- The epistle that Paul wrote to the church at Corinth before the canonical First Epistle to the Church at Corinth (referenced at 1Cor. 5:9): ***“I wrote unto you in an epistle [earlier than this one] not to company with fornicators.”***

The God that inhabits eternity and is the Maker of all things seen and unseen put the words in front of His servants’ eyes that He fully willed, regardless of what any of us perceive as the ‘original source’. So just be careful to hold onto the perspicuity of the omnipotence, omniscience and sovereignty of God if you ever run into scholarship that suggests any word of scripture being less than perfect or that any other word is necessary for our learning and perfection:

And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely. 18 For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: 19 And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book. 20 He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. – Rev. 22:17-20

And:

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: 17 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. – 2Tim. 3:16-17

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So now to the text.

Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called: - Jude 1

Jude begins this letter by reminding the church of those unspeakably magnificent things that the Lord has done for us, and thereby releasing us from the bondage that all other men are bound under.

1. We are called by Him: kletos (klay-toes) - called or invited (to a banquet), invited (by God in the proclamation of the Gospel) to obtain eternal salvation in the kingdom through Christ, called to (the discharge of) some office, divinely selected and appointed.

We are not called because of some merit or worth that we express, but only on the infinite strength of Christ's merits and worth. His calling of us is out of a great love for us, and it is His will to keep us in this love and calling steadfastly, in His long-suffering forbearance and in view of the imputed righteousness of Christ. Our earnestly felt love of Christ is proof of His calling us by the mechanism of His perfect love:

We love him, because he first loved us. – 1Jo. 4:19

We have been irresistibly called by God to receive salvation, to be His true sons and daughters, and to be His ambassadors - carrying forth the Gospel – everywhere He sends us and wherever we find ourselves in this brief vapor of a corporeal life. The reminder to us of God's calling is not some pithy saying – it is a stark reminder for us to desire fellowship with and to hear the voice of our Great Shepherd high above all other voices that are constantly clamoring for our attention and that skew, pervert and otherwise hinder the earnest hearing of God's voice and lessen our desire to seek His face and voice.

2. We are sanctified by God the Father: hagiozo (hag-ee-ad'-zo) – to make holy, to dedicate, separate, set apart for God, and to make conformable in character to such a dedication, to free from guilt, to purify, to treat as holy, so see as holy (in God's eyes).

Our being separated out by God is such that, in His eyes, and because He expressly purposes so, he sees Christ (Himself) in us – though we be not so in our actual manner. For, if we were so in our actual manner, we would have no need of a Saviour – we would

have no need for forgiveness – we would have no need to be presented blameless before the Lamb. Though our sins be as scarlet, we shall be as white a snow (in His estimation, because of His righteousness), We are made to be a peculiar people (which means a people set apart by and for Him).

Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, 9 And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: 10 That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; 11 If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. - Php. 3:8-11

3. We are preserved (kept) by Him: *tereo* (tay-reh'-o) – to keep, preserve, reserve, hold fast, to attend to carefully, to take care of, to guard, to keep on in the state in which he is, to observe or watch

We are literally kept alive by Him. Not because we have superior judgment in crossing the street only when there is not traffic. Not because of our efforts to keep ourselves alive. This keeping is with great purpose – to the end that our preservation is toward experiencing future endless glory in the presence of the Lamb in His full glory, beholding His beauty in all its fullness. Us seeing only our bridegroom and Him seeing only His Bride.

Mercy unto you, and peace, and love, be multiplied. – Jude 2

The apostle here has the most earnest hope and request of God to multiply His mercy, peace and love upon those to whom the letter is written (including us). Mercy is a perfect attribute of God that we sometimes stand in need of a fresh supply of. The special manner in which God shows His mercy to those who He has sanctified. In His covenant (the covenant of grace). God shows us special mercy in providing for us a completely effectual Saviour – who without sin completed His mission in humility, redeeming us, executing the mechanism by which our sin is forgiven, in the regeneration of our hearts and spirits. The multiplication of this mercy toward us means that we stand in need, from time to time, of an enlarged view and a fresh application of it to our consciences – in that our fickle, giddy, wandering hearts tend to get caught up in our own important events and we give lip service to these great mercies of God for a season in our folly. We stand in need of

fresh, intense reminders of all the senses of the great mercy of God, and in our emulation of that mercy in the imperfect ways that we can.

Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. – Mt. 5:7

And:

Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful. – Lk. 6:36

When under afflictions and temptations (testings), when we stand in need of sympathy and compassion, and when we fall into sin, we need fresh discoveries and application of the pardoning mercy of God toward us.

He asks for God to grant his readers multiplied peace from, or in, Christ. We need a fresh, enlarged understanding of the peace of Christ presented to our brains and hearts from time to time. When we, in our pride or otherwise self-involved and vain preoccupation, convince ourselves or others that we already know of this peace and so don't need to be reminded of it or run back through fresh reminders of it, is when we are specifically in need of it. We need fresh reminders of the fundamentals of peace being made for us unto God by His blood, and that an increase of conscience in our hearts is thereby produced by that fresh, enlarged view of the matter.

He asks the Lord to multiply love in his audience. Fresh reminders of the great love wherewith He has loved us. That none of the great perceived roadblocks set in our paths can separate us from the love of God (Romans 8). And Gill adds here: *when it is gradually shed abroad in their hearts by the Spirit, and they are by degrees led into it more and more, and the acts of it are drawn out and set before them one after another, and fresh manifestations of it are made unto them; as in afflictive providences, after the hidings of God's face, and under temptations: and it may design the love with which they love God, which may be increased and made to abound more and more.*

Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth. – 1Cor. 8:1

And:

And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins. – 1Pet. 4:8

This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. – Jn. 15:12

No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. – 1Jn. 4:12

Fresh reminders of both God's great love for us and therefore our faithful emulation of that love, and a multiplying of them, are what Jude was asking God for upon his readers (including us). It is also what we should always ask for as gifts from God for each other, and for ourselves. How can I properly love you – not in my self-fashioned feigned love, but with the love of God, unless that love is multiplied in me – against my own stubborn, prideful, self-deceiving heart? Oh, that God would take that dreadfully wicked, aloof and self-assured heart from me, and from all of us, and instead saturate us in a multiplication of His love!

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. – Jude 3.

After Jude's brief, but powerful, salutation, he gets right after it! In verse 3, he pronounces that he has given all diligence, and found it quite needful, to write a message of exhortation to earnestly contend for the faith. This is not business as usual. Jude is sounding the alarm. Though not in fleshly distress, Jude is clearly communicating the watchful, sober need to oppose all that is not of the unvarnished truth of God. The Greek word there for 'contend' is too long to deal with and saying it doesn't matter, but the proper sense of it exemplifies a wrestling match. It is of paramount importance, in Jude's opening exhortation, that the church hold firm only to the doctrines and teachings of Christ, and to keep them focused upon Christ, gazing upon the cross. The faith that was once delivered unto the saints means:

- A complete rendering of something that is authoritative and complete, needing nothing added to it nor taken away
- Our belief, or faith, includes that all of the Bible to be God's revealed will to us, and only the Bible to be that revealed will
- It is *the* faith – it is objective, and not influenced by personal feelings or agendas

Clearly, false teaching and heretical doctrinal notions entering into the church – not in some blatant, coarse way that everyone can see and ferret out, but in subtle, invisible, seamless ways, is what Jude's mind and heart are stirred to by the Holy Spirit.

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. – Jude 4

This I believe, beloved, is the lynchpin of the whole epistle. We are not talking about obvious charlatans, like the religious carnival show barkers we see on the tv. We are not talking about someone who attempts to jam an obviously heretical doctrine down the throats of the church members. We are talking about false doctrine that, for any one of a number of reasons, seems like sound doctrine (at least at first), regardless of the level of sophistication and maturity of the church makeup. And I believe that the bulk of the remainder of this epistle is spent on fleshing this concept out – and not just as an alarm bell to Jude’s contemporaries. This warning was for them. This warning speaks to all that has happened in the ‘church’ over the intervening two millennia. And beloved, this warning is for us, and for those who come after us, winnowing down to that day when the rider of the white horse brother Tim recently preached about untangles the mess of phony Christian doctrine with His terrible clarity and ultimate authority. Next week, Lord willing, I would like to spend some time unpacking this – talking through what that might have looked like to those of Jude’s time, what it has looked like since then, and what *creeping in unawares* might look like to us today.

I love you all.