

12,15,22 Jude 1-9, Contending for the Faith

As I mentioned during our studies in Peter's letters, Jude is very similar to 2 Peter; some of the language used is identical.

I'll start with a very brief and simple intro to Jude, but it perfectly captures what Jude wanted to do with his letter.

"Jude starts out with the intention of writing a treatise on salvation, but the pressing circumstances in the church required him to write a warning against false teachers and a plea that his readers contend earnestly for their faith. Both Jude and Peter were alarmed at the inroads which false teachers were making."

So, like Peter, Jude had planned to talk about our salvation and the Christian life, but both authors changed course because of the dangers they saw. And we can tell by the language they used, they were furious in the way they exposed the false teachers and almost desperate in how they appealed to their audience to realize those dangers and, as Jude puts it in vs. 3 "contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints."

We also saw in 2 Peter that the infiltration of false teachers in the last generation of Christians would surpass anything that has ever happened in the past – so one would think that 21<sup>st</sup> century pastors would do what Peter and Jude did to prepare and protect their congregations. But this is an age of appeasement, not confrontation.

Here's how Jude starts his letter in the first part of vs. 1; "Jude, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James."

In spite of how forceful Jude was in his writing, he was an extremely humble man. Here's what I mean; these comments are from Barclay;

"Few things tell more about a man than the way in which he speaks of himself; few things are more revealing than the titles by which he wishes to be known. Jude calls himself the servant of Jesus Christ and the brother of James. At once this tells us two things about him. Jude was a man well content with second place. He was not nearly so well known as James; and he is content to be known as the brother of James. In this he was the same as Andrew. Andrew is Simon Peter's brother (John 6:8). He, too, was described by his relationship to a more famous brother. Jude and Andrew could have been resentful of the brothers in whose shadow they had to live;

but both had the great gift of gladly taking a lower position. The only title of honor which Jude would allow himself was the slave of Jesus Christ.”

So, even though Jude was one of Jesus’ brothers, he knows Christ now in a way that is not according to the flesh, so Jude calls himself “a bondservant of Jesus Christ”. “bondservant” comes from the word “doulos”, which means “to bind”. So, it’s an individual who considers himself bound in servitude to someone. But even more than that, *doulos* also means that he literally *belongs* to the one he’s joined to and has no rights of his own – he exists only for the will of his master.

I’m sure we can all see the implications of that. We all spend so much time (myself included) focused on circumstances in our lives that we don’t understand and want the Lord to change, we forget that whatever His reasons are for what we experience, a true bondservant will trust his master and by faith give Him total freedom to do as He sees fit for us.

On the one hand, a slave has no rights, but on the other hand, it’s a good thing when the Master is the Lord and not someone who would not have our best interest at heart. It’s actually a perfect arrangement; unfortunately, that’s not always the way we see it. Part of that is probably self-pity, but a lot may simply be due to the fact that we don’t fully believe what the scriptures tell us of the unconditional love that Jesus has for us.

In the last part of vs. 1, Jude says we are “called, sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ.” God calls unto Himself those He knows will respond to His offer of salvation. Once that relationship is begun, we are sanctified, which means to be set apart for a specific purpose. That purpose is described in Rom. 8:28-29;

“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.”

In His resurrection, Christ became the prototype of a new creation humanity; firstborn from the dead but also firstborn as a title of preeminence. We are “set apart” by God for the purpose of full conformity to the Son of Man.

Then Jude says we are “preserved in Jesus Christ”. This word means “to guard something which is in one’s possession, as to watch as one would, some precious thing; to observe attentively and to retain in custody; kept safe, guarded, watched

over.” Or again as Barclay puts it "The Christian is never left alone; Christ is always the Sentinel of his life and the Companion of his way."

And Ironside adds something that we definitely need to remember in times of doubt or fear;

“Whatever may be the difficulties of life, however great the trial of our faith, in the love of God we are preserved by the One who has saved us. He it is who, ‘having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end’ (John 13:1). Were it not for His grace, not one saint would persevere. ‘He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them’ (Hebrews 7:25). There is no ground for self-confidence, or fleshly elation. Such grace calls for reverent and adoring gratitude, and a walk that corresponds to the lovingkindness lavished on creatures so unworthy.”

And of course, Jude affirms all of this by adding in vs. 2, “Mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you.”

This is another example where a better understanding of individual words can help immensely in knowing what the Lord desires for us.

Bishop Trent explains mercy like this;

“Eleos is the outward manifestation of pity and assumes need on the part of those who are recipients of the mercy. The idea of mercy is to show kindness or concern for someone in serious need or to give help to the wretched, to relieve the miserable. Here the essential thought is that mercy gives attention to those in misery.”

“Peace” (Eirene) means to join or bind together that which has been separated; It follows that peace is the opposite of division or dissension. Peace as a state of concord and harmony is the opposite of war.”

We were once God’s enemies, but now we are His children; not because we deserve this, but because of His mercy and love. God now holds nothing against us; we are fully accepted in Christ.

And finally, the word for love in this verse is ‘agape’, but Jude’s desire is that this love be infused into us so that in our conformity to Christ, we are able to extend mercy, peace and unconditional love to others. As we’ve seen before, the ultimate goal is that others might see a measure of Christ in us.

So, now we are moving into the heart of his letter, where Jude begins to make his appeal to us and to show us what has captured his *own* heart – what *his* concern is.

(Jude 3) “Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.”

First, just an important footnote; when the word ‘faith’ is preceded by a definite article, it’s not talking about exercising faith or believing something, it’s talking about the *object* of our faith – about *what* we are to believe.

So, if it helps, when you see this verse, you can paraphrase it like this;

“Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly (for the full council of God) which was once for all delivered to the saints (through the writings of the apostles).”

Now, like we saw earlier, Jude had planned to write about these things but the Holy Spirit changed Jude’s plans.

I have always thought it was interesting to realize that when the Holy Spirit moves in us for a specific purpose based on a specific insight, we *feel* that to the depth of who we are.

(Jn. 11:33) “When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled.”

(Acts 17:16) “While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was deeply disturbed in his spirit to see that the city was full of idols.”

(Jer. 20:9) “Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could no longer withhold.”

When certain authors in the Bible start emphasizing things rather than just communicating doctrine, something has moved them to do so. Most of Peter’s and Jude’s letters have an imbalanced emphasis on the exposure of false teachers.

As we saw in a previous study, Paul was so distressed by this in Acts 20, he taught it night and day for three years with tears.

I feel sorry for pastors or teachers who are never imbalanced because they are never gripped with a passion for anything. There's not one book in the entire Bible that does not come from a heart that has seen something the writer *had* to communicate. Every book, every epistle, has a major emphasis based on the inward move of God's Spirit.

It was obvious what Peter's was, and it's also obvious what Jude's was. Most commentators are aware of the fact that nearly every epistle has what we would call a "key verse" that basically exposes the inward distress or compulsion of the writer. In Jude that compulsion is what we just saw in vs. 3,

"I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints."

The word for "earnestly" comes from the verb "agonizomai". The transliteration into English would be "agonize". In the original use, it meant "a strenuous struggle to overcome an opponent, as in a wrestling match. Involved is the thought of the expenditure of all one's energy in order to prevail."

Since we know from studying Peter's letters (and other references) that we are living in the one generation in all of church history that is the most opposed to the truth, and that the Church is no exception (we're living in Laodicea), that raises a question for us: To what extent are each of us "agonizing in strenuous struggle" to "contend for the faith once for all delivered to the saints"? And to what extent are pastors doing this to both educate and protect their congregations?

In Adrian Roger's comments on Jude, he wrote;

There has been an apostasy. The word apostasy means "a falling away from the faith," or, "a turning from the faith." And, that is what the little Book of Jude is all about. It is a warning of the apostasy—the lapsing from the faith, the turning from the faith—that is going to take place in the last days.

And Spurgeon added this;

"In the sense of being once for all given to the saints, the faith of Christians is not a variable quantity. It is not a thing which changes from day to day, as some seem to suppose. No, the truth was delivered once for all, it was fixed; and it is for us to hold it fast as God has given it to us."

In Jude 4, we are told one of the reasons *why* this is so important;

“Certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.”

I like the way this author put it;

“Peter warned us that men like these were coming in 2 Pet. 2:1. How could they get into true assemblies of the saints? The soldiers had gone to sleep at the post! The spiritual leaders in the churches had grown complacent and careless. This explains why Jude had to blow the trumpet to wake them up. Our Lord and His Apostles all warned that false teachers would arise, yet the churches did not heed the warnings. Sad to say, most churches are not heeding the warnings today.”

You’ll notice that Jude’s exhortation to us is to fight to hold to the truths the apostles taught, but when he starts describing our ‘opponents’ in this struggle, he doesn’t start listing all the doctrines they are teaching. He mentions two of them, but then focuses most of his writing on the hidden nature of these false teachers.

The reason for that is obvious. At the time Jude wrote, the assault against the once-delivered faith, took the form of lewdness and denial of Jesus as Lord. But the Lord knew that over the centuries, the deceptive doctrines targeting God’s people would take on a multitude of forms. So, it’s more important to know what kind of people these apostates were, and, as Paul puts it, confront and expose them. Here’s some examples;

(1 Tim. 1:19b-20) “Some have rejected these and so have shipwrecked their faith. Among them are Hymanaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme.”

(2 Tim. 1:13-14) “What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you.”

(2 Tim. 2:23-26) “The Lord’s servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.”

(2 Tim. 4:2-5) “Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine.”

(Titus 1:13-14) “Rebuke them sharply, so that they may be sound in *the* faith and will pay no attention to . . . the instructions of those who reject the truth.”

A pastor whose name I’ll spell because I can’t pronounce it (Thabiti Anyabwile) wrote;

“How much attention should we give to false teaching? How ‘worked up’ ought we to be about error? Perhaps a fresh appreciation of Paul’s instructions in the pastorals would be helpful in our day of ‘avoid-controversy-at-all-cost’ attitudes. Though Paul warns us not to be quarrelsome, in the same breath he says refute error. And it’s clear from the various kinds of effects false teaching has on the people of God that failure to reject error and teach sound doctrine is simply dereliction of pastoral duty. It’s cruel neglect.”

We might say we love the saints, but any of us, pastors included, who will not confront false teaching are not defining love the way God does. Withholding the truth is not an act of love.

I want to share something from Sparks that addresses this problem from a different angle; he’s commenting on 1 Kings 18:21; “How long will you go limping between two different opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him.” Here’s what he wrote;

“That word was never addressed to the unsaved. It was never intended for them. This is what the prophet really said to the people: ‘How long limp ye from one side to another?’ He viewed them as lame, and lamed by uncertainty, by indecision, paralyzed by an unsettled issue. Oh, how an unsettled issue does paralyze the life. Have a controversy with the Lord, an unsettled issue with the Lord, and your whole life is lamed, is paralyzed; you are limping first one way and then the other; there is no sense of stability about your way. So, the prophet called for the issue to be settled. Settle this issue one way or the other. If Jehovah be God, let Him have His place, His full rights; settle it once and for all. If Baal is god, well then let us be settled. But until that is done you are crippled, you are paralyzed, and the whole secret of your being in that weak, indefinite, unstable, uncertain place is that

God is not having His full rights; there is a dividedness in your life, a dividedness in your own soul, because other interests and considerations are in view. But wherever it is present the result is that deep down in your being you are not satisfied, you are not at rest. You may be busy, you may be occupied, you may be rushing about in the Lord's name, but you know that deep down there is a lack, an uncertainty, an unsettled state; your spiritual life is limited. It will always be so until the issue is settled, and God has His place in fullness in every part and relationship of your life. It is a question of zeal for the Lord, jealousy for the Lord."

I wanted to share that, because when we stand back and allow false teaching to capture those we care about, it's usually because we don't have a genuine jealousy for the Lord. We aren't willing to risk offending with the hope that 'they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.'

Also, in Jude's description in vs. 4 of the false teachers, he says they "crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men."

We saw in Peter's letters how they "creep in unnoticed" (one author calls them "creepers" – I thought that was great, we should just call them that from now on). All churches have creepers that are assigned by the enemy to steal the truth and spiritual life of God's people. They come in all shapes and sizes, and with as many different approaches as there are fellowships willing to tolerate them.

But, again, Jude's focus is on their character because listing every approach they might take with us would be impossible.

The phrase "crept in" literally means, "to settle down alongside those already there." So, Jude is saying that these false teachers find ways to slip in among us, sit in the same row, and cloak themselves with counterfeit spirituality.

There are some excellent expressions that Barclay adds to further clarify this;

"(It's like) the seductive words of a clever pleader seeping gradually into the minds of a judge and jury; it is used of an outlaw slipping secretly back into the country from which he has been expelled; it is used of the slow and subtle entry of innovations into the life of state, which in the end undermine and break down the ancestral laws. It always indicates a stealthy insinuation of something evil into a society or situation. Certain evil men have insinuated themselves into the church."



Then the author says that they were “marked out for condemnation”.

‘Marked out’ is a word that mean ‘appointed’. Greek scholar and historian, Zodhaiates, explains it like this;

“Marked out means to proscribe, appoint, ordain, post up publicly in writing. Those who were summoned before courts of justice were said to be posted up ahead of time; they were cited by posting up their names in some public place. Even in our day the cases to be heard by a judge are written beforehand and posted in a public place in the courthouse. Those whose names were posted up in writing in some public place, were proscribed as persons doomed to die with a reward offered to whoever would kill them.”

Because of who and what these false teaches are, their condemnation is certain.

Now, let’s move to vs. 5;

“I want to remind you, though you once knew this, that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe.”

We know from other passages that all who were delivered from Egypt were believers and *only* believers; anyone unwilling by faith to put blood on the doorpost of his house, died in Egypt. This verse isn’t separating the true people of God from the false; its separating the spiritual from the carnal. Paul gives us more details on this in 1 Cor. 10:1-6;

“Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, *all* passed through the sea, *all* were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, *all* ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. Now these things became our examples.”

Then in vs. 6, Jude uses the fallen angels as another example of God’s judgment on those who oppose Him;

“The angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day.”

In vs. 5, the bodies of those who were judged were scattered in the wilderness. But for the fallen angels who left their assigned domain and participated in the Gen. 6 corruption of the human race, they are currently bound in chains awaiting final judgment in the Lake of Fire. All fallen angels will ultimately share that fate, but not all principalities and powers are presently locked up.

Henry Morris, who has written several books on creation, summed this up nicely;

“A certain segment of the devil's angels not only followed Satan in his primeval rebellion against God, but also attempted to corrupt all mankind by taking physical possession of the daughters of men to produce giants in the earth in those days (Ge 6:1-4; Job 4:18; 2Peter 2:4). They left their own habitation and have been confined in the lowest and darkest compartment of Hades awaiting the final judgment. Satan still has a great host of fallen angels under his direction (Ephesians 6:12; Revelation 12:3-9), and these will ultimately be cast into the Lake of Fire forever (Mt 25:41; Rev 20:10-15).”

There is another reason in the Greek text itself that shows we are talking about the Gen. 6 angels. This is from Kenneth Wuest;

“This verse begins with *hos*, an adverb of comparison having the meanings of ‘in the same manner as, after the fashion of, just as’. Here is introduced a comparison showing a likeness between the angels of vs. 6 and the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah of vs. 7. But the likeness between them lies deeper than the fact that both were guilty of committing sin. It extends to the fact that both were guilty of the *same identical sin*. The punctuation of the KJV is misleading, as an examination of the Greek text discloses. The sense of vs’s 6 & 7 is that the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, *in like manner* to these angels, have given themselves over to fornication and have gone after strange flesh. The word ‘strange’ is *heteros*, which means ‘another of a different kind.’ That is, these angels transgressed the limits of their own natures to invade a realm of created beings of a different nature. This invasion took the form of a cohabitation with beings of a different nature from theirs.”

Here's the full vs. 7;

“... as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.”

The last phrase in this verse is “set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.” We spent quite a bit of time on this in our study of Rev. 20, but for now, we’ll just touch on the meaning of a couple of the words in this verse.

“Are set forth” is a verb that means “to be exposed” and in classical Greek its used of a corpse laid out for burial, or food brought to a dinner table. The word “example’ is a noun and refers to *that which is* displayed or exhibited.

So, what Jude is telling us is that what happened to Sodom and Gomorrah has been set forth as the example, a historical display or exhibit, of what “suffering the vengeance of eternal fire” means.

“Vengeance” is a judicial term like “justice or a judicial decision” and emphasizes a sentence of condemnation or punishment. Punishment is actually a better translation than vengeance.

The word “eternal” has three possible meanings and would be determined by the context.

- (1) without beginning and end, that which always has been and always will be
- (2) without beginning
- (3) without end, never to cease, everlasting

F.F. Bruce and others said the word “eternal” means “of the age to come” not a specific longevity or length of time. A couple of passages that would support this would be;

(Matt. 25:41-46) “Then he will also say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels! . . .’ Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”

(2 Thess. 1:7-9) “They will pay the penalty of eternal destruction from the Lord’s presence and from his glorious strength.”

In the Matthew passage, the cursed will be punished in the “age to come”, but the righteous will inherit the life characteristic of that age – i.e. the life of Christ. In Thessalonians, the wicked experience the penalty or punishment of destruction in the age to come.

But for now, I don’t want to tangent on this. We went in depth on this topic in our study of Rev. 20.

So, verses 8 & 9 are next;

“Likewise, also these dreamers defile the flesh, reject authority, and speak evil of dignitaries. Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, ‘The Lord rebuke you!’

We covered the issue of false teacher’s hatred for authority in our study on 2 Pet. 2:10 on November 3<sup>rd</sup>. As for the issue of Michael and the devil disputing about the body of Moses, this is the only reference in the Bible to this event.

There are some really strange speculations around this, but the only one I read that I felt had credibility was Edmond Heibert’s;

“It has been suggested that the dispute here mentioned occurred at the time of the translation of the body of Moses soon after his death, since he somehow appeared with the translated Elijah at the transfiguration of Jesus and that the devil contended with Michael that Moses’ body should not be raised again due to his grave sin (in striking the rock for water)”

But then Heiber adds, “(In reality) Jude’s remark leaves the occasion obscure.”

We’ll need to wrap up tonight, but I know that like our studies in Peter, tonight’s study has focused on some of the characteristics of false teachers coupled with a few of their deceptions that were prevalent in Jude’s generation.

We’ve also spent a lot of time over the last few weeks on the soul vs. spirit issue because Satan always makes his appeal to us through the soul and the Lord always appeals through the spirit. In reality, it’s only those who reach a place of being able to *experientially* distinguish between soul and spirit who go on to spiritual maturity – which the letters to the Corinthians and the Hebrews stresses numerous times.

But I thought it might be good to close with a brief look at an area of deception that we haven’t talked about because it never came up *specifically* in Peter’s or Jude’s letters – and that’s the issue of personal strongholds.

It’s a huge part of our warfare, and definitely comes under the category of believing lies, of being deceived, but we haven’t really looked at it. So, here’s some information by David Wilkerson on this that I think will be helpful to all of us;

“Many Christians quote one particular passage of Paul’s writings with a misunderstanding of what he was writing about. ‘For though we walk in the

flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds' (2 Corinthians 10:3-4, NKJV). Most of us think of strongholds or bondages such as sexual trespasses, drug addictions, alcoholism or other outward sins we put at the top of the 'worst-sins' list. However, Paul is referring here to something much worse than our human measuring of sins.

He isn't speaking of demonic possession. In my opinion, the devil cannot enter the heart of any overcoming Christian and claim a place in that person. The figurative meaning of Paul's word for stronghold in Greek is 'holding firmly to an argument.' A stronghold is an accusation planted firmly in your mind. Satan establishes strongholds in the hearts of God's people by planting falsehoods and misconceptions about God's nature. For instance, the enemy may attempt to deceive you by planting a lie in your mind that you're unworthy of God's grace. He may whisper to you repeatedly, 'You'll never be free of your besetting sin. You haven't tried hard enough. God has lost patience with you because of your constant ups and downs.'

The devil may try to convince you that you have a right to bitterness. If you keep listening to his lies, you'll begin to believe them. These lies can become Satan's strongholds.

The only weapon that scares the devil is the same one that scared him in the wilderness temptations of Jesus. That weapon is the truth of the living Word of God. According to Micah, we are to cling to this promise: 'Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in mercy. He will again have compassion on us and will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea' (Micah 7:18-19). We do not subdue our own sins. God will subdue them through repentance and faith."

I think for most of us, our greatest danger in the area of deception are not *external*, false teachers; it's the *internal* whisperings of the enemy. We may have to go Berean on teachers we hear and make some decisions about them, but it seems like we battle with internal confusion and demonic suggestions 24/7.

The reason I chose that particular quotation from Wilkerson is his emphasis on the need for us to stop trying to defeat those suggestions by relying on ourselves in

some way. The way to win this battle, the *only* way, is to counter each whisper with scripture.

If the enemy can get us wrapped up in ourselves or arguing with him, arguing with the “voices in our head”, he’ll probably win the argument. But there’s not much that he can do when confronted with specific verses that expose his lies.

Once we know that this is our only effectual offense against the enemy, it then becomes an issue for us as to whether we believe what the Bible tells us. Our skillful use of scripture when challenged by Satan is going to be done with a great deal more confidence and poise if we *believe* the verses we’re using than if we don’t believe them.

But that’s something we work on over time, the important thing is to remember that our victory isn’t going to be accomplished through some form of introspection or self-justification or cleverness on our part, but only through the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God.