

Place: Lurgan Baptist 7:2:1016

A JOURNEY THROUGH THE BIBLE

Reading: JUDE 1-25

66. THE BOOK OF JUDE

Hugh Latimer (1487-1555) was a Fellow of Clare College Cambridge and Bishop of Worcester before the Reformation. Later he was Church of England chaplain to King Edward the 6th. In 1555 under the Roman Catholic Queen Mary he was burned at the stake. On the 14th April 1554 commissioners from the Papacy began an examination of Latimer, Ridley and Cranmer. Latimer, hardly able to sustain a debate at his age, responded to the council in writing. He argued that the doctrines of the real presence of Christ in the mass, transubstantiation, and the propitiatory merit of the mass were unbiblical. And so at length came the morning of 16th October 1555 when Latimer was led forth out of Oxford jail to die with his younger companion Ridley.

Ridley embraced his friend and they knelt down there and prayed together, and then stripping of their outer clothes and giving little remembrances to their friends they were ready for the fire. Mercifully, a friend hung a bag of gun powder round the neck of each of them, and then they were chained back to back to the post and the fire was brought. “ *Play, the man Master Ridley,*” said Latimer ‘ *we shall this day light such a candle by God’s*

grace in England as I trust shall never be put out.’ As the flames rose up Hugh Latimer bathed his hands in them, as it were, until they reached the powder, and he died. *Why did Hugh Latimer die ?* Because he was prepared to stand against an apostate system, the Roman Catholic Church ? Apostasy the Greek word (apostasia) means ‘ *a falling away,*’ a revolt or defection from the truth of God. Dr. Alan Cairns says ‘ *the use of the word in Acts 21:21 shows that is properly describes a forsaking of the great truths of the Word of God.*’ S. Maxwell Coder writes ‘ *an apostate has received light but not life. He might have received in some degree, the written Word but he has not received the living Word the Son of God.*’ (Jude, the Acts of the Apostles p, 21) Clarence Sexton says ‘ *Apostasy is a subtle rejection of essentials while maintaining the outward form of belief.*’

Now the Book of Jude is all about apostasy. It is the last book in the Bible but one. This fascinating little book has been called “ *the vestibule or the entrance hallway of the book of Revelation.*” And so it is. It brings us into the waiting room of the Apocalypse and prepares us for the closing scenes in the drama of the end times. Someone has said,

The beginning of the age of the church is described in the Acts of the Apostles. The end of the church age is set forth in the Epistle of Jude, which might well be called the Acts of the Apostates.

So here is the only book in the New Testament which is devoted exclusively to apostasy meaning an abandonment of Biblical truth. Now what do we know about,

1. The Author of this Letter:

Can you see his Identity ? Jude. Jude is an English form of the Greek word “*Judas*,” which translates the Hebrew name “*Judah*.” This was a very common name and we find it a lot in the New Testament. Jude or Judas is a name that is synonymous with betrayal for he was a traitor, and became the worst apostate the world has ever known and now in the providence of God this word ushers in a book that is devoted entirely to the subject of apostasy. But who was this Judas ? Well, look at (v 1) again. “*Jude the servant of Jesus and a brother of James.*” Well who was James ? He was the head of the Jerusalem church (Acts 15:13) he was the man who wrote the epistle of James (James 1:1) and he was the half-brother of the Lord Jesus. So Jude was one of our Lord’s half-brothers. (Matt 13:55 Mk 6:3) They did not believe in Christ while he was ministering (Jn 7:5) but after the resurrection James was converted (1 Cor 15:7) and we have every reason to believe that Jude was also saved at that time. (Acts 1:14)

Can you see his Humility ? “*Jude the servant of Jesus Christ*,” He is not standing on ceremony. Some people might have written. “*I am one of Jesus half-brothers and the brother of James.*” But he so down to earth. “*I am the brother of my brother and a slave of Jesus Christ.*” Can you see his Company ? For as we study this little letter we

will discover that many verses in Jude parallel 2 Peter chapter 2. Jude was written after Peter, for Peter prophesied that false teachers would come (2 Pet 2:1 3:3) and Jude says that they are now here and are at work. 1.

2. The Audience of this Letter:

The exact audience to whom Jude sent this letter is unknown, possibly the same believers to whom Peter wrote. (1 Pet 1:1) But one thing seems fairly certain and that is they seemed to be Jewish converts in light of Jude’s illustrations. That Jude was writing to genuine believers is seen in the opening verses where we are told that we are ‘*sanctified by God the Father and preserved in Jesus Christ and called.*’ (v 1) The word ‘*sanctified*,’ can also be translated ‘*beloved*, so we are ‘*called, beloved and kept.*’ There is an echo here of (1 Pet 1:2) where all three Persons of the Godhead are seen to be involved in our salvation. My we are ‘*called*,’ I mean did you not hear the call of God and respond ?

*I heard the voice of Jesus say
Come unto me and rest
Lay down thou weary one lay down
Thy head upon my breast
I came to Jesus as I was
Weary and worn and sad
I found in Him a resting place
And he has made me glad*

We are ‘*loved*,’ ‘*beloved by God the Father*,’ or ‘*in God the Father*,’ The word indicates that God has placed His

love on believers in eternity past (Eph 1:4-5) with results that continue in the present and into the future. He loved me then, He loves me now and He will love me hereafter. My there is nothing we can do to make God love us more than He loves us right now and there is nothing we can do to make Him love us any less. But something else, We are ‘ *preserved,*’ or ‘ *kept for Jesus Christ,*’ These apostates would fall, sin and suffer condemnation but true believers would be kept safe in Jesus Christ for all eternity. My do you appreciate your position ? Do you count your blessings ? ‘ *Called, loved and kept.*’ Incidentally here is another triplet for Jude was very fond of them as Sam Gordon remarks maybe he was a preacher in his spare time and he loved a three point outline.

“ *Mercy, peace and love.*” J. B. Hewitt says ‘ *mercy is God for us, peace is God with us and love is God in us.*’ Now do you see who Jude is writing to ? Perhaps to some particular church but in a broader sense to Christians everywhere. Now what is,

3. The Aim of this Letter:

S. Maxwell Coder observed that James ‘ *wrote his epistle to inform us of the need and importance of good works and that Jude wrote his letter to advise of the danger of evil works.*’ Do you see what Jude says in (v 3) ? You see, Jude had intended to write a very different sort of letter when the Holy Spirit directed him to write about apostasy. He wanted to take us to Calvary to tell us more about that “ *so great salvation,*” purchased for us with the precious blood of Christ. But even as he begins to write the Holy Spirit changes Jude’s mind. As John Phillips

says ‘ *Instead of a manuscript we have a memo, instead of a theology we have a thunderbolt.*’ You see, Jude is writing this letter to condemn apostasy and urge believers to contend for the faith. The first section of the book tells us why to contend because of false teachers, the last section of the book tell us how to contend, showing our true resources. My this little book written about A.D. 68-70 is a wake-up call to the church of Jesus Christ. This is a call to arms, this is Jude sounding the trumpet. This is truth for the times. Now the devil has tried to stop God’s work two ways classically. One way through ***persecution***, and sometimes he does stop the church by persecution, but not real Christians. When real Christians are persecuted, when the devil tries to stamp out the fire, he just seems to scatter the embers. And so the devil by in large tries another way that seems to be more effective to him, not persecution, but ***infiltration***, and he tries to infiltrate the church with error. My is this not one of the greatest threats to the church ? Perhaps the greatest ? During external pressure the church continues to thrive but internal corruption is another thing. So that’s why Jude writes this epistle. I have divided it into three parts.

(1) THE ATTACK V 1-4

From Apostasy. Sound doctrine is under siege.. In fact, it always has been. The attack on truth is as old as human history. Do you recall how Satan in the Garden of Eden sought to distort God’s Word ? Do you recall how he doubted God’s Word ? “ *Yea hath God said ?*” (Gen 3:1) Then he denied God’s Word. “ *Ye shall not surely die.*”

(Gen 3:4) Has this not been his tactic even since ? No wonder the Lord Jesus called him ‘ *the father of lies.*’

(Jn 8:44) Now here was Jude’s burden. He intended to write an explanation of the faith but need turned him to write an exhortation to defend the faith. Why ? Because false teaching was infiltrating the church, seeking to lead many astray. My I wonder at times have we forgotten the importance of truth ? Have we failed to consider the repeated warnings in Scripture about apostasy ? Do you recall the Lord Jesus in (Matt Ch 24) in that great passage about the end times said, “ *Many false prophets shall arise and shall deceive many.*” (Matt 24:11) In his farewell speech to the elders at Ephesus Paul warned of this. (Acts 20:29-30) Paul cautioned Timothy “ *Now the Spirit speaketh expressly that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils.*” (1 Tim 4:1) Paul continued “ *If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ.*” (4:6) How would you define a good minister ? Well, Paul says he is one who alerts God’s people to the danger of apostasy ?

Peter (2 Pet 2:3) and John (1 Jn 4:1-3 2 Jn 7) also warned of the danger that false teachers posed to the church. Why John says “ *If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.*” (1 Jn 7) So do you see here,

(a) THE DANGER TO THE CHURCH: V 4

You see Jude was disturbed because false teachers were attacking the church from within.

Look at their Presence: these false teachers were already present. The word “ *unawares,*” means slipping in secretly with an evil intention. They had wormed their way into the congregation. Did you ever see a clip of an alligator lying on the bank of a river then slithering into the water so subtly, secretly, and silently that he is unnoticed ? Well, that is the picture here. It’s one thing to have false teachers outside the church who oppose the Word of God openly, but it’s another thing to have counterfeit pastors, elders, deacons and members within the church who oppose the Word of God subtly. (Acts 8:9-25)

Look at their Prophecy: “ *Who were before of old ordained to this condemnation.*” (v3) It simply means that long ago God pronounced damnation against all apostates. (Is 8:20-22 Jer 5:13-14 8:12-13) I mean is this not what Enoch’s prophecy was all about ? Here was a man who at the beginning of history prophesied of the doom of apostates ?

Look at their Practice: “ *turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness,*” (v4) or licentiousness. It means they told people that grace permitted them to live as they pleased. They felt that they had a license to live an immoral sexually degraded life. They simply said ‘ *the grace of God is so broad that the Lord will forgive you anything you do.*’ (Rom 6:1) Do you ever hear that idea within society, even within the church ? ‘ *Sure if I love*

someone anything I do with that person is justified.' Christians are in danger of going astray by thinking as long as they are believers that moral conduct does not matter, and that is what Jude is warning about.

Look at their Problem: “ *and denying the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.*” (v 4) Jude is not writing about two different persons when he wrote about ‘ *the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ*, for as Warren Wiersbe says ‘ *the Greek construction demands that these two names refer to one Person.*’ In other words Jude is declaring the Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is God. Now apostates all sooner or later attach the truth about Jesus Christ, for is apostasy not an attack on His person or work ? But look at that statement again.

“ *denying the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.*” Do you see here the Uniqueness of our Lord Jesus Christ ? I mean we live in a ‘ *multi-religion*,’ country and the man on the street has decided that all religions are right. Indeed many of them say that they are favourable towards Jesus Christ, but the key word in (v4) is ‘ *only*.’ Do you see it ? My don’t be fooled by people who say “ *Oh yes I believe in Jesus,*” but they don’t believe in the Uniqueness of Christ, they don’t believe He is the only name whereby we must be saved.

Ask them ‘ *do you believe He is the only way, not just a way, the only truth not just a truth, the only life, not just a life ?*’ and you will find they don’t for they do not accept Christ as unique. Now this was the danger to the church. Their belief was Unscriptural and their behaviour was ungodly. (a) But do you see here,

(b) THE DUTY OF THE CHURCH: V 3

How are we as Christian believers to react to this danger ? Well look at (v3) Now I want you to notice here,

The FAITH;

Its described in (v 20) as “ *your most holy faith.*” Now there is,

A Clearness about this Faith: for Jude is not talking here about something which is subjective, but about something which is objective. He is not talking about the act of believing but of “ *things most surely believed.*” (Lk 1:1) You see, there is a vital distinction made in the New Testament between ‘ *faith*,’ and ‘ *the Faith*.’ Faith is the act of believing but the Faith is the sum total of revealed Truth. To put it simply as Sam Gordon says ‘ *the faith is the Word of God.*’

A Comprehensiveness about this Faith: For in this little letter Jude mentions most of the fundamental articles of The Faith which we are to defend. For example we have

The Fact of sin: V 4

The Doctrine of Grace: v 4

The Glorious Person of Christ: v 4

Eternal life through Christ: v 21

The existence of a personal devil v 9

The Divine Trinity: v 20-21

The Personality of the Holy Spirit: v 19-20

The Sovereignty of God: v 25

The Eternal Security of Believers: v 24
The Fact of Judgment and Hell: v 6,7, & 13
The Divine Inspiration of the Scriptures as proved by
its prophetic and historical accuracy: (v 5-19)
The Personal return of Christ: (v14)

Here then is *The Faith* as Jude defines it.

A Completeness about this Faith: “ *the faith which was once delivered to the saints,*” (v 3) The same Greek word (hapax) is used in (Heb 9:26) where we read, ‘ *but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.*’ Just as there is no more sacrifice needed for sin, so there is no more Scripture needed for the saint. In every sense of the word it is a finished work, it is complete. We have it all. Do you know what this means ? It means we can rule out so called prophets, prophecies and others forms of new revelation which is the Charismatic Movement claim is still forthcoming. ‘ *No,*’ says Jude ‘ *the Bible is complete.*’ (Rev 22:18) This is all the truth we need for every spiritual need in life. The Faith but notice,

The FIGHT:

For do you see the phrase “ *earnestly contend,*” ? The Greek word gives our English word ‘ *agonize.*’ It’s the picture of an athlete competing in the Greek games and stretching his nerves and muscles to do his very best to win. You see, while the modernist contests the faith, the true believer must contend for the faith. It’s a call to arms, it is a summons to battle. It’s to put up a real fight. And

this vigorous defense of the Faith must be done continually, conscientiously and compassionately. Matthew Henry says “ *earnestly but not furiously.*” My aren’t you glad that the truth of God was not delivered to theologians or bishops but to you ? I mean in so many churches today the gospel is watered down, it’s neutralized, its compromised, and its replaced. Think of the inroads the enemy has made in schools, Bible colleges, denominations, pulpits, on the radio, and television. *Why should we be silent when our precious faith is being attacked ? Why should we be sidelined when denominational leaders seek to undermine the Bible ?* Attack the person and work of Jesus Christ and tell us that hell is a figment of our imagination ? The great reformer, John Calvin said this, “ ***Even a dog barks when his master is attacked. I would be a coward if I remained silent when God’s truth is being attacked.***” Let me ask you, do you know anything about contending for the faith ? Do you stand for the truth ? Do you stand with the truth ? Do you stand by the truth ? (1)

(2) THE ARGUMENT V 5-15

About Apostasy. I heard about a man who went in to rob a bank, and he wrote a note and slipped it to the cashier. And he said, ‘ *Put all your money in this bag, this is a hold-up.*’ She wrote him a note and sent it back to him, it said, ‘ *Straighten your tie, they’re taking your picture.*’ Now what a picture we have, here of an apostate. You see, Jude traces the history of spiritual apostasy from before time to the end of time. In so doing he tells us that,

(a) False Teachers are Doomed: v 5-7

Here he refers to three groups who apostasised. He talks about **Unbelieving Israelites:** You will recall that the nation was brought out of Egypt by the power of God and was brought to the border of the Promised Land. But they did not have enough faith to go in and possess the Land.

(Num 13-14) The result ? They wandered aimlessly for forty years and all in the camp twenty years and older died. (Num 14:29) The entire nation was delivered but that does not mean that each individual was saved (v19) For a “ *mixed multitude, went up also with them.*”

(Ex 12:38) They were “ *fellow travelers,*” who had joined the movement but they missed the most important thing of all, the blood. These false disciples, like Jude’s false disciples were destroyed. (Jn 17:12) Jude talks about **Unsubmissive Angels:** Could it be that these were the angels who consorted with the daughters of men in (Gen 6:1-4) and produced a race of giants ? Whatever, the bottom line is, they rebelled against God and paid dearly for it. Jude also speaks of **Ungodly Cities:** Sodom and Gomorrah. These cities at the southern end of the Dead Sea had fallen into perverted sexual practices.

Do you recall that when God’s angels visited Lot’s house, the men of the city surrounded Lot’s house and ordered him to send his guests out to them so that they might indulge their lusts. God judged that city for its sin. Someone has said ‘ *if God does not punish America He will have to apologise to Sodom and Gomorrah.*’ What a day we live in when Protestant churches are ordaining

men who indulge in the vile sins of Sodom. One thing is sure. (a)

(b) False Teachers are Denounced: v 8-10

Do you see how Jude begins (V 8) ? or “ *in the very same way.*” He is simply saying that history is repeating itself. As it was so it is. This is what was happening in Jude’s day and what about our day ? Are we not back to the days Jude so vividly paints ? People who are marked by sexual immorality (defile the flesh) by insubordination (despise dominion) and by slander (speak evil of dignities) ‘ *Why,*’ says Jude ‘ *even Michael did not treat the devil flippantly but said the Lord rebuke thee.*’ But Jude goes a step further. (a) (b)

(c) False Teachers are Displayed: V 11

Do you want to know how the apostate church thinks ? Well, look at the men in (v11) “ *The way of Cain,*” is described in (Gen 4:1-7) He brought a bloodless sacrifice to God. He denied the efficacy of the blood and the need for Calvary. Is this not the way of apostate liberals in our day ? They look to culture instead of to Calvary. Is the way of Cain not with us today ? It was William Booth the founder of the Salvation Army who said the chief danger facing the modern church was to proclaim ‘ *a religion without Christ, a salvation without regeneration, and a heaven without hell.*’ “ *The error of Balaam,*” this involved leading others into sin for personal gain. Balaam knew the truth but he deliberately led Israel into sin that he might make money. Do we not need to be careful of

our motives ? (Num Ch's 22-25) “ *The gainsaying of Kore,*” do you recall that Korah led a rebellion against Moses, the official spokesman for God ? (Num 16:3) For this great sin he was send down into the pit, the earth opening its bowels and swallowing him. Harry Ironside says “ *the way of Cain,*” is **false religion**, “ *the error of Balaam,*” is **false ministry**, and “ *the gainsaying of Kore,*” is **false worship and rebellion against God's authority.**” (a) (b) (c) and,

(d) False Teachers are Described: v 12-16

For notice that Jude gives us five word pictures of an apostate. They are Dangerous: the word ‘ *spots,*’ means ‘ *hidden rocks.*’ They can sit with you at the Lord's Table but they will bring your work to ruin. They are Deceptive: ‘ *clouds without water,*’ they are empty when it comes to fulfilling promises. They are Dead: ‘ *twice dead,*’ because they have only been born once. They are Disturbed: “ *raging waves of the sea,*” is this not how Isaiah described the godless ? (Is 57:20-21) They are Doomed: “ *wandering stars to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.*” (v13) Indeed Enoch right at the beginning of history prophesied of their doom. My should our hearts be stirred when we think of loved ones who are going out into ‘ *the blackness of darkness for ever* ?’ (1) (2)

(3) THE ANSWER: V 17-25

To Apostasy. I mean how are to act in the light of this situation ? How are we to defend the faith against apostasy ? Well notice we are to,

(a) ACCEPT THE WORD OF GOD: V 17-19

Look at (v 17) Remember what ? The words of the apostles. I mean men like Paul (1 Tim 4:1-3) Peter (2 Pet 2:1) and John (1 Jn 4:1) said that false teaching would infiltrate the church. You see, one of the main tests of the Early Church was this. ***Is this what the apostles taught ?*** When the church assembled the New Testament books it was required that each book be written by an apostle or by someone close to an apostle. Apostolic teaching was and still is the test of truth. O. S. Hawkins reminds us “ ***the truth is, if the words are new they are not true.***” My what is our defense against apostasy ? What Jude calls “ *your most holy faith.*” (v 20) My we must know the Word of God and have the courage to defend it. Sam Gordon in his helpful book on Jude quotes R.C. Sproul who says,

We fail in our duty to study God's Word not so much because it is difficult to understand. Not so much because it is dull and boring. But because it is work. Our problem is not a lack of intelligence, or a lack of passion. Our problem is that we are lazy. (a)

(b) APPROACH THE THRONE OF GOD: V 20

“ *Praying in the Holy Ghost,*” what does it mean to pray in the Holy Spirit ? It means to pray according to the

leading of the Spirit. My we need a Spirit energized prayer life, praying in the Spirit, not praying for the Spirit or for the gift of tongues. This is Holy Ghost praying. Praying under the direction of the Holy Spirit. Pleading the merit of the Saviour's blood and the pleading the promises of the Word of God.

(c) ABIDE IN THE LOVE OF GOD: V 21

“ *Keep yourselves in the love of God,*” (v21) Now Jude did not say “ *Keep yourselves saved,*” for he had already assured them that they were “ *preserved in Christ Jesus.*” Rather he wrote ‘ *keep yourselves in the love of God.*’ Christ made a similar statement when He said ‘ *Continue ye in my love.*’ (Jn 15:9) It simply means that we must stay obedient to God, is that not where blessing is promised ? Do you recall what the Lord Jesus said ? “ *If ye keep my commandments ye shall abide in my love.*” (Jn 15:10) But there is something else here.

(d) AWAIT THE SON OF GOD: V 21

“ *Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.*” The word translated ‘ *looking,*’ means ‘ *earnestly expecting.*’ Is this your attitude as you await the return of the Lord Jesus ? (a) (b) (c) (d)

(e) ADDRESS THE ENEMIES OF GOD: V 22-23

For compassion is to be shown to those who have been led astray by false teachers. Do you see what Jude says ?

“ *Making a difference.*” In other words treat each situation individually. It seems that there are three different groups here who need spiritual help. Another Translation puts these verses like this. ‘ *And have mercy on some who are doubting, save others snatching them out of the fire, and on some have mercy with fear hating even the garment polluted by the flesh.*’ In other words we are to show pity those who are in Doubt: (Confused) to those who are in Danger: (Convinced) and to those who are in Definite Sin. (Committed) All the time watching, that we are not defiled by them ourselves. (v 23) You see, no one is beyond the grace of God. People can be saved. Do you believe that ? Are we involved in the work of rescuing the perishing ? John Wesley said “ *You have only one business and that is the salvation of souls.*” Here is the antidote to the poison of false teaching. But there is something else here.

(f) ACKNOWLEDGE THE ABILITY OF GOD: V 24

In (v 1) we are kept *for* Jesus Christ, in (v 24) we are kept *by* Jesus Christ. You see, despite all the apostates say or do we are eternally secure. One day the Bridegroom will present the Bride faultless in glory and what a day that will be. Does that not encourage you to,

(g) ADORE THE PERSON OF GOD: V 25

Jude his name means ‘ *praise,*’ closes this brief, brave book on the brightest note. ***He is able:*** the Power of God: ***Keep:*** the Preservation of God: ***Present:*** the Purpose of God: ***Joy:*** the Pleasure of God: for He will have pleasure

in His own. Jude is reminding us of the *Greatness; the Glory: and the Government of our wonderful Saviour*. If only believers would see Him, they would never be led astray. This is the God we worship. This is the God we adore. This is the God we serve. And this is the faith for which we contend. May we say like Martin Luther ‘ ***Here I stand I can do no other God help me.***’