

Mount Pisgah A.M.E. Church

Rev. Jay B. Broadnax, Pastor

Bible Study, Wednesday, September 7, 2016

Survey of the Bible

Lesson 67: Jude

The Book of Jude

The book of Jude is written to be a word warning and a word of exhortation (encouragement). Similar to many of the latter epistles, it is thought to be a general epistle (not written to a particular audience and intended for general hearing), however it does address a particular issue that seems to have been plaguing a region – the incursion of false teachers who “scoff at” (trivialize, make fun of) faith in Christ, and try to make it seem irrelevant. Jude is a charge to believers in regions where this is taking place to stand up and contend for the faith.

Author

The name “Jude” is a shortened version of the name Judas (which is actually another form of the Hebrew word Judah, meaning praise). In spite of its connection to the betrayer of Jesus (Judas Iscariot), Judas was actually a very popular name in first century AD, because of the popularity of one of the heroes of the Jewish people, Judas Maccabaeus, who was a leader of the Jewish resistance against the oppressive Syria during one of their revolts.

The author identifies himself as “the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James.” There are several “Judes” mentioned in the Bible, however one of these was the brother of James, Jesus’ brother who after Peter was one of the earliest leaders of the Jerusalem Church. Thus it is thought that this Jude was also a brother (although much younger) of Jesus (see Matthew 13:55).

The Times and context of Jude

Very little is given about time or context of Jude, or of geographical location of its addressees. However if we assume that Jesus’ brother wrote it, one can conclude that it may have been written at some point during the middle of the first century, prior to the death of Jesus’ generation.

Jude’s description of heretics is similar to that found in 2 Peter. If one compares Jude to 2 Peter, there are obvious similarities between 2 Peter 2:1-3:4 and Jude 4-18, and 2 Peter 3:3 and Jude 18 are almost identical. It is believed that Jude used 2 Peter as a source, and thus was written after it, possibly in the early 60’s AD. Although the faith spread steadily during the missionary journeys of Paul and others, so did many types of opposition:

- Judaizers – Those who accepted Christianity but wanted all converts to observe the Jewish law
- Anti-Legalists – Those who wanted to accept the grace offered by Christ’s salvation but made a distinction between their salvation status and the way that they lived their lives.
- Apostates – Those who once traveled among disciples but left the faith because they had allegedly “found something better.”

All of these perspectives had adherents that the epistles were attempting to speak out against.

Overview

A number of the epistles confront the problem of false teachers, and almost all of the epistles allude to it. Jude goes beyond all of them in its passionate argument against these “apostates” (those who have left the faith but are still teaching). This urgent letter has four major sections: A salutation and statement about the urgent

agenda of this letter, (2) a description of false teachers in the context of history, (3) what to do about them, and (4) a praise for the One who will keep them in the midst of increasing opposition and resistance.

Outline

- I. Salutation (v. 1-4)**
 - A. Greeting (1-2)
 - B. Purpose (3-4)
- II. Caution about False Teachers (5-16)**
 - A. Past Judgment of False Teachers (5-7)
 - B. Present Characteristics of False Teachers (8-13)
 - 1. What they do (8-10)
 - 2. Who they are like (11)
 - 3. What they are like (12-13)
 - C. Prophecies about them (14-16)
- III. What to Do (17-23)**
 - A. What to Remember (17-19)
 - B. What to Do (20-23)
 - 1. Build yourselves up (20-21)
 - 2. Minister to others (22-23)
- IV. The One We Serve Will Keep You (24-25)**

Keys to Understanding Jude

- Jude wants to condemn the practices of those who think that “grace” means that people can claim God’s forgiveness and then proceed to do whatever they want (“licentiousness”), ignoring God’s principles. This mindset was infesting congregations, particularly those who were fleeing the restrictive legalism that certain adherents to the Jewish law (such as the Pharisees) promoted. The tension between law and grace has continued to be a challenge for Christians down through the years.
- Jude’s message is that in contrast to those who are engrossed in their freedoms and individuality, those who call themselves believers are “called and loved by God”, and “kept by Jesus Christ.” Following one’s own passions “natural instincts” leads to bondage, but being “built up in one’s faith and praying in the Holy Spirit” leads to freedom.
- Jude also wants to speak out against those who trivialize spiritual things. He is not saying that “celestial beings” (v8) should be worshipped, but he is saying that spiritual things should be respected. It’s not that they don’t matter, but it’s that what we have in our favor is greater.
- It should also be pointed out that a number of the quotes and historical references from Jude are not found in our Bible (or “canon” of scripture), but rather in the set of books known as The Apocrypha. These books are considered by Protestant Christians to be useful for historical and contextual purposes, but don’t hold the same *authority* or *inspiration* that the 66 books found in our Bible do.

Some Lessons from Jude

- It is important for us to understand how easy it is for one’s mind to be polluted by false teaching and by popular perspectives. This is why it is so important for believers to constantly *pray* and *study God’s Word*.
- Many people don’t appreciate spiritual things - they think they are outmoded myths and fairy tales. However, when they experience some sort of major crisis in their lives that defies logic, they are looking for answers. This is the time when believers NEED TO BE SPIRITUALLY PREPARED to minister to them. This is not the time for “I told you so,” or to beat people up with Bible *quotes*, but rather to MODEL a Biblical lifestyle and EXPLAIN Biblical principles. Always be ready to humbly and mercifully roll up our sleeves and pull people out of their fire.
- Even with all of the pulling and confusion and differing perspectives, God is ABLE to KEEP us and PRESERVE us to stand strong, and will purify God’s own from the staining and negativity that surrounds us.