

- ***READ Jude 1-4*** Though one of the shortest writings in the Bible, the letter of Jude has much about it that we simply do not know for certain. We are not entirely sure who Jude was. He writes that he is a brother of James, and that leaves us with two options. He is either the brother of James the son of Zebedee or he is the brother of James the brother of Jesus (**Galatians 1:19**) which of course would make himself a brother of Jesus. With James the son of Zebedee martyred very early on in the history of the church, we can probably conclude this Jude (or Judas) as being one of the brothers of Jesus. (**Matthew 13:55 & Mark 6:3**)
- We are also unsure as to who the recipients of this letter are. They are referred to as those *"who are the called, loved by God the Father and kept for Christ Jesus."* (**v.1**) I believe we can safely assume them to be Christians of the Jewish background based upon the many references to Hebrew history. (Egypt, wilderness, Sodom & Gomorrah, the body of Moses, Cain, Balaam, and Enoch) While this description could apply to Jewish Christians in any place, it does seem as if Jude has some familiarity with these people based upon the language he uses in referring to them as *"dear friends."* (**vv.3,17,20**)
- Further, we are also unsure of when this letter was written. If this is Jude the brother of Jesus then we could assume that it was written sometime within his lifetime. However, the internal evidence would probably lead us to believe that it would have been written later on in his life. I say this based upon the addressing of false teachings that would have needed time to develop within the first century. These addressing of false teaching are similar to what is found within the letters of Peter and John, so we can probably put this letter sometime after AD 60 but before the very latter years of the first century.
- Finally, we are left scratching our head a little bit by the references in **v.9** to the *Assumption of Moses* and the reference in **vv.14,15** to *1 Enoch*. What we have is an inspired text making references to supposedly non-inspired writings. Why would Jude do such a thing? Is his doing so a statement of his belief in their inspiration? Or is he simply quoting them as Paul did in **I Corinthians 15:33** to make a point? Again, we do not know for certain but it gives us something to think upon.
- Nonetheless, with these unknowns and uncertainties in mind, let's take time to consider what we do know for certain about this letter. We are told early on that Jude was eager to write to them concerning the salvation that they shared, but he found it necessary to write about something else instead. This short letter's focus centers around that other theme which was their need to be contending for the faith that was delivered to the Lord's saints once and for all. There were false teachers that were afflicting these brethren, and their teachings were probably an early form of Gnosticism which was a philosophy that saw physical matter as evil and the spirit as good. This seems evident when we see what is said in **v. 4** regarding them *"turning the grace of our God in sensuality and denying Jesus Christ, our only Master and Lord."* Those holding to the Gnostic belief would see their bodies as being open for anything since they were inherently evil and they couldn't imagine God coming in the flesh because of its inherent evil.
- Therefore, it seemed vitally important to Jude to take time to write to these brethren to encourage them to stand up strong against these false teachings and contend for the truth faith that has already been delivered to them. Jude uses this letter to remind these brethren of what God has done in past times towards rebels, what He will do to these rebels, and how they can stand strong against the difficulties they are facing in this spiritual battle. Let's begin by considering God's consistent history in how He deals with rebels.

I. God has consistently punished those who rebel against Him. (vv.5-7)

- A. Jude begins with a reminder concerning three different groups that rebelled against God and faced punishments that were handed down by Him.
1. The first group is that of some of the people of Israel who were brought up out of Egypt. Jude mentions that Jesus (an evidence of His eternal existence...earliest manuscripts read "*Jesus*" instead of "Lord"...possible that Jesus was actually the Angel of the Lord, **Exodus 23:20**) had saved them out of Egypt in order to bring them into the land that had been promised to their forefathers. Unfortunately, they often rebelled against the Lord and the height of their rebellion can be read about in **Numbers 14 & 32** when the Lord renders punishment to them for their complaining at the doorstep of entering into Canaan. Their doubt led to the majority of the people not being allowed into the promised land. They would have to wander in the wilderness for 40 years while those who were punished died out.
 2. The second group is that of the "*angels who did not keep their own position but abandoned their proper dwelling...*" Now, there are a number of theories as to whether or not this is a reference to something that is written of in the Bible. Some would say that Jude is drawing upon what took place in **Genesis 6** between the sons of God and the daughters of men. Jewish tradition holds what took place as described in I Enoch as historically accurate even if not inspired by God. The reality is that we simply cannot know for certain beyond what they did warranted them being "*kept in eternal chains in deep darkness for the judgment on the great day.*" Bottom line is that they rebelled and God was swift in His punishment of them.
 3. Finally, Jude references what took place in Sodom & Gomorrah which is recorded for us in **Genesis 19:24-29**. Those wicked people rebelled against God in their sexual immorality and perversions and He rained down fire and brimstone upon their cities as punishment.
- B. The use of these examples surely served as a reminder to these brethren to reinforce within their minds the fact that these rebels and anyone who joined them would be in strong danger of facing the wrathful judgment of God. Our God is not a God who changes. He is righteous and demands justice for those who rebel against Him and His desires for them. No one was exempt from His standard...not heathens...not angels...not even His own covenant people. These rebels during Jude's day would be no exception.

II. Jude's audience is dealing with people who continue to rebel against God. (vv.8-11)

- A. Beginning in **v. 8**, Jude begins to paint a picture for the recipients of this letter as to whose footsteps these current rebels were following. These flesh defiling, authority rejecting, and glorious one (angels...**II Peter 2:10**) slandering people had no regard for remaining in their proper place, but they sought to do as they please. They would do with their bodies as they wanted. They cared not for those who had authority over them. They were even willing to slander heavenly beings. They presumed to be much greater and more important than they actually were.
- B. Jude alludes to what many believe as the *Assumption of Moses* which is an Apocryphal writing that contains a story about Michael the angel archangel and Satan arguing over whether or not Michael could bury Moses's body. It is not known for certain whether Jude believed this story to be real, but it seems at the least that he is using this story as an example of even Michael not rebuking and slandering another supernatural being but invoking the judgement of the Lord upon Satan's deeds. His point is that these people were being far too high and mighty in their own eyes, and he gives three more examples of people who did such things.
1. Cain (**Genesis 4:4-9**) thought of himself as being so important that he had a right to kill his brother when his brother was blessed by God for his righteous burnt offerings.
 2. Balaam (**Numbers 22:1-24**) thought he was something special and spoke against God's people.

3. Korah and his followers (**Numbers 16:1-35**) thought they deserved to be the leaders of God's people and tried to take the places of Moses and Aaron.
- C. Again, these examples are given to remind these people that this isn't the first time that people have gotten a little too big for their britches. Men had a horrible habit of thinking of themselves as being more important than they are, and it has led to some horrible punishments just as would be the case for these people that were giving these brethren trouble.

III. God will punish these people just as He did the rebels who came before them. (vv.12-19)

- A. This third section pinpoints and highlights the wicked characteristics of these people are, what they are like, and what will be their outcome. Firstly, let's notice what this section says about their wicked deeds.
 1. ***"These people are discontented grumblers, living according to their desires; their mouths utter arrogant words, flattering people for their own advantage."*** (v.16)
 2. ***"But you, dear friends, remember what was predicted by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. They told you, "In the end time there will be scoffers living according to their own ungodly desires." These people create divisions and are worldly, not having the Spirit."*** (vv.17-19)
 3. The main emphasis in these verses is to highlight the selfish nature of these individuals. They are people who live according to their own ungodly desires. They simply want to do whatever it is that they want to do. They have no regard for the will of the Spirit within their lives, and by this they are constantly causing divisions among the faithful. They are constantly grumbling, but they are able to fool people by their flattering and arrogant words.
- B. Now consider the metaphors that are used to help describe these rebellious people. .
 1. ***"These people are dangerous reefs at your love feasts as they eat with you without reverence. They are shepherds who only look after themselves. They are waterless clouds carried along by winds; trees in late autumn—fruitless, twice dead and uprooted. They are wild waves of the sea, foaming up their shameful deeds; wandering stars for whom the blackness of darkness is reserved forever."*** (vv.12,13)
 2. They are like reefs in the since that you are unaware of their danger until too late. We don't know for certain what the "love feasts" might be referring to, but some believe this to be a reference to the Lord's Supper. If that is the case then we get the picture of someone who is participating in worship yet they are just going through the motions and biding their time until they can cause trouble.
 3. They are like selfish shepherds...people who ought to be carrying for others, but instead care only for themselves. They are like waterless clouds and fruitless trees who others would hope would be bringing help, but instead they are only full of empty promises and lack of aid or service. Their wild and rebellious lifestyles make them like wild waves that bash upon everyone around them. They are like wandering stars which some ancient people believed disappeared into darkness for no apparent reason. None of these metaphors shed a good or positive light upon these people, and their end would only be negative.
- C. Finally, consider what their outcome will be in the end.
 1. As we just saw, Jude says that these people only have the blackness of darkness reserved for them forever. This seems to be an allusion to separation from the Father for He is the light and there is no darkness in Him at all. If we are separated from the Father then there is only darkness that is reserved for us.

2. Additionally, Jude again references Enoch in quoting a prophecy from *I Enoch 1:9* that is a prophecy of judgment that would come upon those who are ungodly. They might believe that they would get away without punishment, but eventually their ungodly ways would catch up with them and they would suffer the wrath of God. If these brethren wanted to avoid such an end then they had to stand strong against these rebels and their influence.

IV. Jude concludes by encouraging these brethren to build themselves up *"in the most holy faith."* (vv.20-25)

- A. The way they could stand against their rebellious influence was to build themselves up in the most holy faith. This faith was the faith that had been delivered to them up to this point. It had been delivered through the Apostles and other divinely inspired individuals who had the gift of prophecy and knowledge that revealed the mind of God to His people. **(v.3)** This faith was fully sufficient in helping these people to be pleasing to God and it granted access to the great grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ. **(v.4)**
- B. Whereas these people were relying on their own dreams that led to sin, Jude instructs these brethren to hold fast to the good word of faith that had already been delivered. He certainly did not want to have to write another letter that would say something similar to what is found in **Galatians 1:6-9**, so he therefore wanted them to rely only upon what had already been delivered and build themselves up only in that faith through the aid of the Holy Spirit, keeping themselves in the Love of God, and leaning upon the mercy of Jesus Christ.
- C. Part of building up is to love encourage those who are struggling. Jude says that they were to have *"mercy on those who waver; save others by snatching them from the fire; have mercy on others, but with fear, hating even the garments defiled by the flesh."* **(vv.22,23)** If Jesus shows us mercy then we ought to strive to show that same mercy to others by helping them through the difficulties of this life. Our contending for the faith isn't just standing strong against false teachings, but it is also helping to building others up in this great faith. That is Jude's message to these brethren, and we would do well to embrace it, as well.

Jude seems very confident that the recipients of his letter would be able to stand in the end before God without blemish used upon Jesus's protection, and we need to remember that this same protection is available to us today. We continue to see rebellion against God all around us, and we must be a people who are contending for the faith that we have in Christ Jesus. I feel confident that we will have work to do this week in this regard, and it is my hope that our considerations in Jude will motivate and encourage us to be strong in standing for the truth and remaining undefiled by sin.