

Bible Study Class
Clayton Presbyterian Church
Lesson 1 Jude

Opening prayer from Jude 1-2: To those who have been called by God, who live in the love God the father and the protection of Jesus Christ: May mercy, peace and love be yours in full measure. Amen

Jude

David Guzik quotes Guthrie as saying, "These shorter letters of the New Testament are often neglected, but the neglect of this important letter says more about us than it does about the Book of Jude." The introduction to the book in my bible says the letter from Jude was written to warn against false teachers who claimed to be believers. In this brief letter which is similar to 2 Peter, the writer encourages his readers "to fight on for the faith which once and for all God has given to His people."

Jude 1-2 Greeting

The name is literally "Judas." But to avoid connection with Judas Iscariot, most English translators have used the name "Jude." We believe that the writer of this Epistle is the half-brother of Jesus. The fact that he wanted himself to be known a bondservant of Jesus Christ instead of introducing himself as "Jude, the half-brother of Jesus" tells us something of the humility of Jude and the relative unimportance of being connected to Jesus by human relationships. To Jude, the blood of the cross that saved him was more important than the family blood. Jude wrote to Christians. It deals with things that believers need to hear, but often don't want to. They were sanctified which means that they were set apart from the world and unto God. Jude gives a warm and typical greeting. Mercy, peace, and love while like the greetings in most of Paul's letters it is a bit different. The Greek word rendered "mercy" has the primary meaning of "compassion." Jude wants his readers to live as people who are conscious of being forgiven with the full experience of mercy. What Jude says is that God's mercy is inexhaustible.

Read Jude 3-4 The purpose of the letter

Jude's initial desire was to write about our common salvation. But something happened and he found it necessary to write a different letter. In the letter, Jude preached against the dangerous practices and doctrines that put the gospel of Jesus Christ in danger. Jude dealt with issues seriously. We should be happy that Jude was sensitive to the Holy Spirit here. Instead of being a letter from a leader

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to a particular church, it has become a precious instrument inspired by the Holy Spirit. Our common salvation is common in the sense that we come to God the same way. To be a Christian means you stand shoulder to shoulder with millions of Christians who have gone before. We stand with strong Christians and weak Christians, brave Christians and cowardly Christians, old Christians and young Christians. We are part of an invisible, mighty army that spans back through the generations. Jude wanted his readers to contend earnestly for the faith. This was the great need that Jude interrupted his intended letter to address. It also involves a continuous struggle. We contend earnestly for the faith because it is valuable and valuables are protected. By stressing the word "you" we see that Jude wanted every Christian to do. How can we show others that we value our faith? We contend for the faith in a practical sense when we live uncompromising Christian lives and give credit to the Lord who changed us. Each one of us should contend for the gospel wherever God puts us. The phrase the faith means "The essential truths of the gospel that all true Christians hold in common." Once means that the faith was delivered one time, and doesn't need to be delivered again. We don't have the option to simply make up our own faith and still be true to God. We need to contend for the faith because there are dangerous men among Christians. Certain men have crept in unnoticed: In part, this is what makes them so dangerous - they are unnoticed. No one noticed that they were dangerous. They probably claimed to be more Biblical than anybody else was. Spurgeon says the devil knows that one devil in a church can do far more damage than 1000 devils outside the church. They are ungodly simply in the sense that they are not like God and no matter the outward appearances, they disregard God. These certain men had received something of the grace of God. But when they received it, they turned it into an excuse for their lewdness. These certain men had both moral and doctrinal problems. Jude's use of the word "faith" stands for the Gospel message that was "entrusted to the saints." The fact that the Gospel is "entrusted" to the saints implies that it is their duty to pass it on and proclaim it to others. This corresponds to Jesus' command: "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation." God, he implies, has handed over to his people a recognizable body of teaching about his Son. If they feed on it, they are nourished. If they reject it, they fail. The test of progress is, for him, faithfulness to the apostolic teaching about Christ. They are the weeds in Jesus' parable about the weeds sown among the wheat by the enemy. The Old Testament, the teaching of Jesus and that of

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the apostles all contain ample warnings against the advent of false teachers. *Godless* seems to have been a favorite word of Jude's. It refers here to their attitude of irreverence to *God*, to their shameless deeds, and to their illicit desires. They deny the divinity of Jesus Christ. The Tyndale Commentary asks the question: "Why does Jude go to such length to show that the certain men troubling his readers were prophesied long ago? The prophetic predictions which they fulfill show that they constitute a serious danger to the church.

Read Jude 5-7 Three warning reminders

Jude knew that needed to hear these familiar examples and apply it to their present situation. At Kadesh Barnea, the people refused to trust *God* and go into the Promised Land of Canaan. Therefore, almost none of the adult generation who left Egypt entered into the Promised Land. They did not endure to the end, because they did not believe *God's* promise of power and protection. This example gives two lessons. First, it assures us that the certain men causing trouble will certainly be judged. Secondly, it warns us that we also must follow Jesus to the end, the test of Christianity is endurance. It is a powerful way of showing that the prophecies from of old are now being fulfilled. Jude speaks of the angels who sinned, who are now imprisoned and awaiting a future day of judgment. We don't know who these angels were but one possibility is . There was the sin of the sons of *God* described in *Genesis* 6:1-2. This offence was connected with some kind of sexual sin, such as the sexual union between rebellious angelic beings and the human beings. The unnatural union corrupted the genetic pool of mankind, so *God* had to find Noah. This unnatural union prompted *God* to uniquely imprison the angels who sinned in this way. We know that angels have the ability to assume human appearance at least temporarily, but we don't know more than that. Apparently, some fallen angels are in bondage while others are unbound and active among mankind as demons. By not keeping their proper place, they are now kept in chains. If *God* judged the angels who sinned, He will judge these certain men. Secondly, it warns us that we also must continue walking with Jesus. For it was lust and pride that led to the downfall of these angels. Pride, because they were not content to keep their positions of authority given them by *God*. Sodom and Gomorrah stand as examples sin that brought forth *God's* judgment. Sodom and Gomorrah were blessed, privileged places.

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Read Ezekiel 16:48-50

These verses show that Sodom and Gomorrah were indeed prosperous, blessed areas. You don't have fullness of food, and abundance of idleness if you don't have material blessings. But despite their great blessing from God and material prosperity, they sinned and were judged. In Genesis 19, Sodom and Gomorrah suffered the vengeance of eternal fire from heaven. If the blessings of the past didn't guarantee their future spiritual state, then neither does ours.

Read Jude 8-10 The analogies of judgment applied

Jude connected the certain men with the people of Sodom and Gomorrah in their sensuality defile the flesh and in their rejection of God's authority. Since they wanted to be in authority, they rejected the authority of God and they rejected those God put in authority. Today, our culture encourages us to reject authority and to recognize self as the only real authority in our lives. When Jude called them dreamers, he meant they claimed to have prophetic dreams which were really deceptions. Their rejection of authority was connected with their speaking evil of dignitaries. In verse 9 Michael the archangel as an example of someone who would not speak evil of dignitaries. Jude mentioned two kinds of angelic beings. Michael is among the angelic beings faithful to God, who are the servants of God and man. The devil is among the angelic beings rebelling against God, who are the enemies of man. Clarke observes that neither archangel nor devil are ever found in plural form. According to teachers in the early church, Jude referred to an apocryphal book known as the Assumption of Moses. Some have said that the devil wanted to use Moses' body as an object of worship to lead Israel astray into idolatry. Others have thought that Satan wanted to desecrate the body of Moses, and claimed a right to it because Moses had murdered an Egyptian. Remember that one place we hear or see Moses after his death is at the Transfiguration. For Jude, the main point isn't why Michael was disputed, but how he disputed with the devil. Michael's reply was "The Lord rebuke you." First, we see that Michael was in a battle. Secondly, we see that he battled in the Lord's authority. God hasn't called us to judge the devil, to condemn the devil, to mock him or accuse him, but to battle against him in the name of the Lord. Guzik contrasts Michael's reply with the certain men who spoke evil against the dignitaries. Their evil speech was made worse by their ignorance. They did not know about true spiritual leadership and authority - so they found it easy to speak

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evil against it. Even what they knew naturally, they still used to corrupt themselves with an unspiritual mind. Jude is stating a profound truth in linking these two characteristics together. If a man is persistently blind to spiritual values, deaf to the call of God. There will come a time will come when he cannot hear the call. He turned to turbulent instincts in search of freedom. And those instincts, given free reign, are merciless. Lust, when indulged, becomes a killer."

Read Jude 11-13 Three more Old Testament examples

The certain men have gone in the way of Cain, Balaam and Korah. Cain brought an offering from his harvest. Abel brought an offering from his flocks. God accepted Abel's offering, but He rejected Cain's sacrifice. Hebrews 11: 4 says the real difference was between faith and unbelief. You can give to God whatever you have or whatever you are, but you must offer it in faith. The false teachers, Jude states, know no conviction of sin. In a fit of anger Cain murdered Abel, and then he lied about it to God. Jude is saying that these certain men are acting like Cain. Jude goes on to compare these certain men to Balaam in Numbers. You remember him, he was the prophet with a talking donkey who God used to tell him to turn back. He went on with his sin though he knew it was a sin because he longed for the promised rich reward. When he was unsuccessful in cursing Israel, Balaam advised Balak on how to bring Israel under a curse. Instead of trying to have a prophet curse Israel, he should lead her into fornication and idolatry and then God would curse a disobedient Israel. He brought a plague of judgment upon Israel that killed 24,000. Therefore, Balaam was guilty of the greatest of sins: deliberately leading others into sin. Worse yet, he did it for money. The third example that Jude uses is the rebellion of Korah. Korah was a Levite, which meant that he could serve in the tabernacle, but not perform the priestly duties. As a Levite, he had had his own God-appointed sphere of ministry, yet he was not content with it. He wanted the ministry and the authority of Moses. Two other Levites, Dathan and Abiram, joined him in his protest. Moses then proposed a test: each group took censers for burning incense and came before the Lord. When they both came before God, the Lord told Moses to step away. They died when the earth opened up at the place where they were standing, they fell into the opening and the earth closed above them. We see three leading characteristics of the false teachers. Like Cain, they were devoid of love. Like Balaam, they were prepared in return for money to teach others that sin did not matter. Like Korah, they were careless of the ordinances of

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God and insubordinate to church leaders. It is not without significance for Jude's purpose that each of three Old Testament characters taught others to sin, and each met with ruin. The early Christians often met for a common meal, something like a potluck dinner. They called these meals love feasts, or "Agape Feasts." When these certain men came, they were serving only themselves. They ate greedily at the love feasts while others went hungry. The selfishness of these certain men spoiled the fellowship. Jude's accusation that the false teachers "feed only themselves" is an obvious reference to Ezekiel's prophecy about the shepherds of Israel, which reads: "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy and say to them: 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Woe to the shepherds of Israel who only take care of themselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock?'" **Ezekiel 34: 2** They are like clouds which bring promise of rain, but give not a drop to the thirsty ground, they merely serve to hide the sun. They exist just for themselves. The certain men were like these clouds. But these certain men did not bear fruit even when they should. They were like the barren fig tree of Jesus' parable found in Luke 13. The suggestion is that the immoral behavior of these teachers is not something that is carried on in secret, but that it is openly displayed as a lifestyle that is part of the "freedom" propagated by these people. The fruit of these men was like the foam or scum at the seashore. Jude has in mind the ugly shoreline after a storm has washed up all sorts of driftwood, seaweed and debris. Like comets streaking through the sky, these certain men astonished the world for a time, and then vanished into darkness. Unless they repent, they would end up in hell - and be there forever.

Read Jude 14-16 The certainty of judgment upon these certain men.

Here Jude quoted from Enoch. Enoch is described in Genesis 5:24. Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him. The ancient book of Enoch was not received as Scripture, but it was highly respected among both the Jews and early Christians. God is coming to judge all of the ungodly. Many people take the judgment of God lightly and we are foolish not to prepare for that judgment. These people were complainers. It has rightly been observed that whenever a man gets out of touch with God, he is likely to begin complaining about something. The idea seems to be that they are not saying anything out loud, but are grumbling under their breath. They use flattery to get what they want from others but

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blame others for their problems. They considered themselves to be incomparable. These are sensual persons, who cause divisions, not having the Holy Spirit.

Read Jude 17-19 The methods and spiritual status of the certain men.

Instead, he tells us to focus on our walk with the Lord, help others affected by the certain men, and to focus on God. We simply are to pay the certain men no attention, except for what is necessary for our warning. God will take care of them. It is not clear whether this means that the false teachers separated themselves from the church, or whether they caused separation within the church. They were, indeed, very like the Pharisees, and Jude deals with them much as Jesus had dealt with the Pharisees. The Apostles as well as Jesus warned about the false teachers that would come before the return of Christ.

Read Jude 20-23 Jude's exhortation to the faithful

Keep yourselves in the love of God means to keep yourself in harmony with God's ever-present love. God's love is always present but the focus is on God no on us. It means to keep growing spiritually, and to keep building up. The Holy Spirit may help us pray by giving us the right words to say when we pray. Keep looking for the love of God through the mercy extended by Jesus. Take a look outward, to those around you. Jude's final three commands are this. Those that are driven into doubt need mercy. Second, those seduced by these false teachers need rescuing. Third, the certain men themselves need "mercy mixed with fear." They must be urged to repent and warned of judgment. To keep ourselves in God's love we must keep the faith and keep ourselves from being seduced by bad teachers. The Holy Spirit is instrumental in making our faith in Christ grow. The phrase "Keep yourselves in God's love" indicates that it is our responsibility to remain in the protecting circle of God's love. God's love is unconditional, but our experience of it isn't! "We must remain within the sphere of God's love. It is possible to turn one's back on the love of God. Here Jude urges them to fulfill their side of the covenant love with God. Adam Clarke reminds us that none of the praying, building or keeping can have us earn heaven on merit but only through the mercy of Jesus Christ.

Verses 24 and 25 are Jude's Doxology. Take a look upward to the God of all glory. We will use it as our closing prayer.

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Jude's doxology reminds us of God's care and of our destiny. Perhaps his original readers thought that with so much false teaching and immorality around, very few Christians would ever reach heaven. Here he reminds them that the answer lies only in the power of God. He concluded with the recognition that it is ultimately God who keeps us from stumbling and falling. God calls us to a partnership with Him. We can be presented before Him with exceeding joy. When we acknowledge and declare the truth about God, it glorifies Him. We are just recognizing and declaring God's majesty. There are enemies of the gospel who have infiltrated the church. Yet despite the greatness of the threat, God is greater still. He wins, and if we will only stay with Him, we are guaranteed victory also. Jude is a book full of warning, but it closes with supreme confidence in God.

Closing prayer is verses 24-25 of Jude. Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to God our Savior, Who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen.

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| Jude 3-4 | Jude 14-16 | Ezekiel 16:48-50 |
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