

12. Jude 1-7 of a Verse by Verse Study of the Letters of John and Jude

Jude is a short but powerful letter. The letter centers on the need to contend for the faith, the certainty of eternal destruction by fire, and the need to fortify the church against scoffers. Many of the illustrations refer to angels, making Jude a source of more information about these celestial beings than other scriptures.

Introduction

Jude 1-2

1 Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and a brother of James,

To those who have been called, who are loved by God the Father and kept by Jesus Christ:

2 Mercy, peace and love be yours in abundance.

Jude, also called Judas, may be that Judas of John 14:22, "22 Then Judas (not Judas Iscariot) said, 'But, Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?'" That he is here called the brother of James may make him the brother of Jesus also, if he is talking about that James, the brother of Jesus. Matt 13:55 reads, "55 Isn't this the carpenter's son? Isn't his mother's name Mary, and aren't his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas?"

Many claim that Jude and Thaddeus of Matt 10:2-4 are one and the same:

2 These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon (who is called Peter) and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; 3 Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; 4 Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

Jude's self-styled description is simply "a servant of Jesus Christ and a brother of James." He addresses the letter to "those who have been called, who are loved by God the Father and kept by Jesus Christ." The calling of Christians as the process by which they are made finds its explanation in 2 Thess 2:13-15, where Paul said:

13 But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth. 14 He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. 15 So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter.

All Christians are called through the gospel and saved through belief of the truth. Where Jude says that we are loved by God, Paul says that we are loved by the Lord. Paul also further explained what it means to be kept (blameless) by Jesus in 1 Thess 5:23-24:

23 May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 24 The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.

The introduction concludes with a prayer for mercy, peace, and love in abundance.

Contend for the Faith Once for All Entrusted to the Saints

Jude 3-4a

3 Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints. 4 For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you.

Contend for the Faith

Jude 3, more than any verse in the New Testament, affirms the complete and unchanging revelation of God to man. The expression, *the faith*, means the revealed will of God to man. In writing about our common salvation in the face of ungodly men who have slipped into the church, Jude immediately goes to the fact that Christians must contend for the faith. Paul spoke of the one faith, side by side with one Lord and one God in Eph 4:5, “5 one Lord, **one faith**, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.” [Emphasis added] Paul further asserted that the church should be built up until we reach unity in the faith. In Eph 4:12-13, Paul wrote:

12 to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13 until we all reach unity in **the faith** and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Paul, just as Jude, urges the contending for the faith in Phil 1:27: “Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, **contending as one man for the faith of the gospel.**”

The faith consists of the deep truths, according to 1 Tim 3:9, “9 They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience.” Paul teaches that those holding to the faith may abandon it in 1 Tim 4:1, “4 The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.” Paul describes our contending for the faith as a fight in 1 Tim 6:12, “Fight the good fight of the faith.” Paul returns to this idea of the good fight of faith in 2 Tim 4:7, “7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.”

Once for All Entrusted to the Saints

Once for all entrusted to the saints establishes without a doubt that God’s revelation was complete and final. The key to this verse is the phrase once for all. Is it certain that this is the complete faith delivered once for all time? The scriptures answer this question by using the exact wording in reference to the finality and certainty of Christ’s death—*once for all* in Heb 9:26-28:

But now he has appeared **once for all** at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. 27 Just as man is destined to die **once**, and after that to face judgment, 28 so Christ was sacrificed **once** to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him. [Emphasis added].

Just as Christ appeared once for all, the faith was delivered (entrusted) once for all. Nothing remains to be revealed.

There was, after the New Testament, no further revelation—neither a voice within, nor a latter day revelation as held by some modern sectarians, nor any theory of development in religion, such as that held by many denominations. The faith was once for all delivered. Paul speaks of the complete revelation of God’s mystery in Rom 16:25-26:

25 Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, 26 but now

revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey him.

Paul also taught in Eph 1:9-10 that God brought all things together when he made known the mystery of his will which he purposed in Christ:

9 And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, 10 to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment – to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.

Paul teaches clearly that the manifold wisdom of God would be universally made known through the church in Eph 3:8-11:

His grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, 9 and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. 10 His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, 11 according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.

John records how God's mystery was accomplished in Rev 10:6-7:

There will be no more delay! 7 But in the days when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet, the mystery of God will be accomplished, just as he announced to his servants the prophets."

Then in Rev 11:15-18, the seventh trumpet not only sounds, but God fulfills the revelation of his mystery:

15 The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said:

"The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ,
and he will reign for ever and ever."

16 And the twenty-four elders, who were seated on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God, 17 saying:

"We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty,
the One who is and who was,
because you have taken your great power
and have begun to reign.

18 The nations were angry;
and your wrath has come.

The time has come for judging the dead,
and for rewarding your servants the prophets
and your saints and those who reverence your name,
both small and great –
and for destroying those who destroy the earth."

After the Revelation by John in 96 AD, nothing more was ever added or will be added. The faith was delivered once for all.

License to Sin

Jude 4b

4b They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.

It was not uncommon for those who rejected the truth in New Testament times to appeal to the grace of God to justify sin. Paul wrote in Rom 6:1-2, "6 What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? 2 By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?" In verse 8, Jude will call them *dreamers*. Jesus called them *ferocious wolves* in Matt 7:15-16, "15 Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. 16 By their fruit you will recognize them." Paul called these same deceivers *savage wolves* in Acts 20:29-31: "29 I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. 30 Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. 31 So be on your guard!" Note the secret and deceptive nature of these false teachers. In the next section, Jude will spell out their certain punishment

God's Punishment of Eternal Fire

Jude 5-7

5 Though you already know all this, I want to remind you that the Lord delivered his people out of Egypt, but later destroyed those who did not believe. 6 And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home – these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day. 7 In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire.

In this section, Jude seizes three examples to illustrate the certainty of God's punishment with eternal fire. God destroyed the first group—the children of Israel—for unbelief; he punished the second—the angels who did not keep their positions of authority—for daring to challenge God; the third—Sodom and Gomorrah—for sexual immorality and perversion.

The fate of the children of Israel was spelled out by Moses as he forecast their certain judgment in Deut 31:29:

"29 For I know that after my death you are sure to become utterly corrupt and to turn from the way I have commanded you. In days to come, disaster will fall upon you because you will do evil in the sight of the Lord and provoke him to anger by what your hands have made."

Job's writings in the Patriarchal Age describe the fate of angels in error. Job 4:18-20 tells of this error and extends like treatment to mankind:

18 If God places no trust in his servants,
if he charges his angels with error,
19 how much more those who live in houses of clay,
whose foundations are in the dust,
who are crushed more readily than a moth!
20 Between dawn and dusk they are broken to pieces;
unnoticed, they perish forever.

In Matt 25:41-42, Jesus related the punishment of the wicked servants to that of wicked angels, "41 Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'" Peter taught in 2 Peter 2:4-5 that these angels were in gloomy dungeons,"4 For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to

hell, putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment.” Rev 12:7-9 tells of the cause to these dire circumstances and manner in which these angels exceeded their authority:

7 And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. 8 But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. 9 The great dragon was hurled down – that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.

The fate of Sodom and Gomorrah was just as certain and terrible. Gen 19:23-26 describes the punishment as rain of burning sulfur:

23 By the time Lot reached Zoar, the sun had risen over the land. 24 Then the Lord rained down burning sulfur on Sodom and Gomorrah – from the Lord out of the heavens. 25 Thus he overthrew those cities and the entire plain, including all those living in the cities – and also the vegetation in the land. 26 But Lot's wife looked back, and she became a pillar of salt.

Peter retold what had happened to Sodom and Gomorrah and related that event directly to what is going to happen to the ungodly. 2 Peter 2:6 teaches, “6 if he condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by burning them to ashes, and made them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly.”

We must always remember that these serve as examples of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire.