

Message #1**Various Texts**

Many years ago, my aunt taught us a little poem about church that was done with hands to illustrate the poem. The poem was this: “Here is the church, here is the steeple; look inside and see all of the people.”

That poem could be the mantra of the entire religious world. There are lots of churches and there are lots of steeples and if you look inside you will see lots of people. You can look inside thousands of churches today and see all kinds of churches that are filled with all kinds of people, who are searching for some religious experience.

We have people in churches that are rich, middle class and poor. We have people who are educated, somewhat educated and not educated. We have people who are very gifted and very ordinary. We have people who are successful and those who are not successful. We have people in churches who are godly and who are godless. We have people going to church who strive to be saintly and those who are pursuing sin. All kinds of people can find a church that will conform to whatever suits their fancy.

Now when it comes to the churches people are attending, you have a hodgepodge of teachers and teachings that offer a vast array of confusing doctrine. There are churches that teach Catholic theology and there are churches that teach Protestant theology. There are churches that teach liberal theology and conservative theology. There are churches that teach Calvinism and churches that teach Arminianism. There are churches that teach liberation theology and replacement theology. There are churches that are legalistic and churches that are licentious. There are churches that worship God, Buddha, Allah, the Sun, the Moon and the Stars and even Satan.

Then to complicate things further, when you look at the format of the services and the activity of the churches, there is a smorgasbord of things for people to select. You can pick a church that fits your own interests. There are churches that focus on counseling and friendship. There are special interest groups that will make you feel good no matter what your problem or sin. There are churches that have coffee shops, health clubs, snack bars, financial seminars, entertainment, bands, lights and even dancing girls. Whatever your religious itch, there is a church out there that will scratch it.

Actually, this reality is not new to our day. Back in 1981, David and Ronald Hesselgrave saw these things and wrote a book that had a title that sums it all up: “*What in the world has gotten into the Church?*” **Their conclusion was what has actually crept into the church is the world (p. 12).** The church is no longer sacred; it is secular.

But this church problem did not start recently, it existed 2000 years ago back in Biblical times and **what is actually needed right now in the church to help straighten things out is an accurate understanding of the 25 verses that comprise the book of the Bible known as Jude ! This little epistle is written to confront this problem head on.**

In the next weeks we would like to take you on a journey through this remarkable little book. To introduce it, we would like to ask and answer five questions:

QUESTION #1 – Why study the book of Jude?

We are going to study this book for four reasons:

Reason #1 - Because Jude is one of only 66 inspired books given by God to His people.

Now we always start book studies with this reason, but in our day and in light of the subject matter of Jude this reason becomes even more significant. I want to be very clear on this point— God wants His people carefully understanding all 66 inspired books that He has given.

It is true that there is value in studying what is happening in the world and what is happening in the church, but what is needed more than anything else is a study of God's Word. In light of what this book teaches and in light of what is happening in the world, there will not be too many churches who will actually promote this philosophy.

Most churches will offer all kinds of things other than a careful exposition of the 66 books of the Bible in their pulpits. But if you actually consider the fact that God gave only 66 inspired books to us, we would be very wise if we made the primary focal point of our church life to carefully understand the 66 books.

I want to speak personally about this for just a moment. I have a long way to go in my Christian life and I certainly have not arrived to the level I want to be. However, I have also come a long way in my Christian life to the point where I know what I believe and why I believe it. The thing that has given me the soundness of doctrine and the stability to my faith is the Word of God. I did not get that from seminars or retreats or even some of the courses I took along the way; it has come from trying to understand every Word God has inspired in every book.

Jude is not the shortest N.T. book. It is a book that contains 461 Greek words which is more than II John, III John and Philemon. But Jude is one of the most powerful N.T. books. One writer said there are many things in Jude that have no parallels anywhere in Scripture (S. D. F. Salmond, *Jude*, p. 11).

Now the fact is that Jude is one of those rare inspired books and that point cannot be denied. The evidence that Jude is one of those inspired manuscripts of God is even better than a book like II Peter.

- 1) It was quoted as a book of Scripture by Irenaeus (A.D. 130); Tertullian (A.D. 150).
- 2) It was specifically said to be an authentic book by Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 150); Cyril of Jerusalem (A.D. 315); Jerome (A.D. 340) and Augustine (A.D. 400). In fact, Clement of Alexandria quotes Jude multiple times in his writings.
- 3) It was listed as a book of the Bible in the key canon book listings: Muratorian (A.D. 170); Apostolic (A.D. 300) and the Athanasius (A.D. 367).
- 4) It was translated as an inspired book of the Bible in the old Latin translation (A.D. 200).

5) It was named as an authentic book of the Bible by the early church council meetings in Laodicea (A.D. 363); Hippo (A.D. 393); Carthage (A.D. 397 & A.D. 419).

In the Martyrdom of St. Polycarp, the Bishop of Smyrna, **verse 2** of the book of Jude is cited. By the end of the second century Jude was considered canonical in Rome, Africa and Egypt.

What I find interesting is that because Jude perhaps cites a couple of non-biblical sources (**v. 9** - *The Assumption of Moses*; **vrs. 14-15** - *Book of Enoch*), this is a matter that has caused controversy. In other words, because of the quotations of things outside the Bible, some challenged whether or not Jude belonged in the Bible. So the book was scrutinized even more than normal to determine whether it was an inspired book of God, and it proved to be. So the evidence is even more powerful because it came under such scrutiny. Jude is a rare book and it is one of the 66 rare inspired books of God and it is needed right now.

Reason #2 - Because God wants us to be people who earnestly contend for the faith. **Jude 3**

We have a job to do and that job is to be a good, faithful, front line witness for Jesus Christ and for what a Christian and church is supposed to be. To be a good witness we must know what we believe and we must know why we believe it and you must be able to spot those who don't believe what is right.

We live in a politically correct world in which no one wants to speak up or speak out against religious frauds. No one wants to point out evil, corrupt religious leaders or churches. Well, Jude presents a different idea. Jude says it is our responsibility to earnestly contend for the faith and part of that means pointing what is true and who is false. Jude is a "hammer blow" against false religion. God does not want us sitting quietly on the sidelines not opening our mouths. He wants us front line contenders.

Some people we witness to need to hear about the grace and mercy and forgiveness of God (**v. 22**). Some people we witness to need to hear about the future fires of hell (**v. 23**). But it is the responsibility for each of us to earnestly contend for the faith system that says you may be saved by faith alone in Christ alone.

What we need today are churches that are doctrinally solid and clear-headed. We need to be people and we need to be a church that is able to stand up and stand out for the truth of God in the midst of an ungodly religious church world. The book of Jude is a book designed to help promote this idea.

Reason #3 - Because we are living in the last days of the Church Age and many religious people will be pursuing godless things and not godly things. **Jude 17-18**

As the Church Age winds down, more and more people will seem to be interested in church, but not interested in dealing with sin. There will be more and more people interested in going to church to be happy, but not holy.

We need to be people who have doctrinal stability, Biblical backbone and spiritual and moral integrity. God does not want us to be people who are ungodly lust-crazed, immoral sex maniacs (**v. 7, 18**). God does not want us to be people who are worldly minded (**v. 19**).

God does not want us to be people who promote some insurrectionist political cause (**v. 8**). God wants us to be holy people who make a powerful statement for him (**v. 20**). God wants us people controlled by His Spirit.

Reason #4 - Because Jude is probably the most neglected book of the entire New Testament.

Now probably most people who have gone to church for a while know the last two verses of Jude (**verses 24-25**) because they have been cited many times at the conclusion of church services. But beyond those two verses, as William Barclay said, Jude is more “bewildering than profitable” (*Jude*, p. 157). The sad fact is the book of Jude is rarely, if ever, completely expounded.

Peter Davids observed that you will rarely hear a text for a sermon preached from the book of Jude (*Jude*, p. 7). Not only that, but you will rarely hear it in a Christian College, Bible School or seminary classroom.

Jude is a book rarely read at all and if it is read, most people don't seem to care if they know what it even means. But let's be real clear here—there are godless men and women who go to church and who are going to go to hell (**Jude 4**). We do not want to neglect this book because there are serious consequences for those who do. For these reasons we are going to carefully study this book.

QUESTION #2 – Who wrote Jude?

The first word of the book tells us the name of the man who wrote it and the first word is “Jude” (Ιουδας). **Jude** is the English name; **Judas** is the Greek name and **Judah** is the Hebrew name. The problem is trying to figure out which Jude wrote it. Now in the New Testament there are six guys named Jude.

- 1) There was the man named Jude (Judas) of Damascus in whose house Paul prayed after his conversion (Acts 9:11).
- 2) There was a man named Jude or Judas Barsabbas who was a leading man who was sent by the Jerusalem council to travel with Paul back to Antioch (Acts 15:22).
- 3) There was Jude or Judas Iscariot the traitor (Luke 6:16).
- 4) There was Jude or Judas, not Iscariot, the son of James and an apostle (John 14:22; Luke 6:16; Acts 1:13). He was one of the twelve and seems to have been called Lebaeus or Thaddaeus (Mt. 10:3; Mk. 3:18; Lk. 6:16; Acts 1:13).
- 5) There was Jude of Galilee who stirred up the Jews after Christ's birth, but died (Acts 5:37).
- 6) There was Jude or Judas who was the brother of James and the half-brother of Jesus (**Jude 1:1**). James was the brother of Jude and also the half-brother of Jesus (Mt. 13:55; Mk. 6:3). This James became famous as the leader of the Jerusalem church (Gal. 1:19; Acts 12:17; 15:13-21; 21:18).

We get specific helpful information in that first verse when we read that this Jude was the **“brother of James.”** Obviously Jude was written by a guy named Jude, who was the brother of James. No other writer of any book of the Bible identifies himself by his family connection.

There are two possibilities.

If Jude is the apostle, then his father James could have been James, the son of Alphaeus (Lk. 6:16; Acts 1:13). The problem is he is said to be the brother of James.

The only other possibility is that this Jude was the brother of James, the half-brother of Jesus.

In the chronological listing of the children of Joseph and Mary, Jude is the third son listed by Mark (Mk. 6:3), and the fourth son listed by Matthew (Mt. 13:55). So either he was the youngest half-brother or next to the youngest half-brother of Jesus.

If Jesus were born in about 4 B.C. and was crucified around A.D. 29-30 when Jesus was about 33, then Jude would have been about 20 when Jesus died and arose and ascended back into heaven. There was typically a 2-3 year gap between children and we aren't sure just when the half-sisters were born (Mt. 13:56; 6:3), so Jude could have been about 20 when Jesus died.

One question is why didn't Jude just say, “I am the brother or half-brother of Jesus Christ”? There is one main reason. When Jude was growing up, Jude did not believe that Jesus was who He actually was (John 7:5), namely the God/Savior/Messiah. We may assume that since Jesus appeared to James after His resurrection, both James and Jude believed in Him (I Cor. 15:7). Jude had come to realize who Jesus Christ actually was. He realized that Jesus Christ is our God, Master, Lord and Savior (v. 4, 24). He came to realize that the Person he grew up beside was not a normal brother. He came to realize that Jesus was, in fact, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. **He would not call himself His brother, but His servant. He recognized his own insignificance in view of Jesus Christ and he did not even bring up the fact he had been His half-brother.**

Eusebius, the church historian, tells an amazing story about Jude's two grandsons who were brought to appear before Domitian, the Roman Emperor, from A.D. 81-96, who had ordered the execution of all in the Davidic line. What ultimately happened was that Jude's grandsons were used by God to actually stop the persecution of Christians. Here is what Eusebius writes:

“And there still survived of the Lord's family the grandsons of Jude, who was said to be His brother, humanly speaking. They were informed against as being of David's line and brought by the evocatus (veteran) before Domitian Caesar, who was afraid of the advent of Christ as Herod had been. Domitian asked them (Jude's grandsons) whether they were descended from David, and they admitted it. Then he asked them what property they owned and what funds they had at their disposal.

They replied they had only 9000 denarii between them, half belonging to each; this they said was not available in cash but was the estimated value of only 25 acres of land, from which they raised the money to pay their taxes and wherewithal to support themselves by their own toil.” Then according to Eusebius, “they showed him their hands, putting forward as proof of their toil the hardness of their bodies and the calluses impressed on their hands by incessant labour. When asked about Christ and His Kingdom what it was like, and where and when it would appear—they explained that it was not of this world or anywhere on earth but angelic and in heaven and would be established at the end of the world, when He would come in glory to judge the quick and the dead and give every man payment according to his conduct. On hearing this, Domitian found no fault with them, but despised them as beneath his notice let them go free and issued orders terminating the persecution of the church. On their release they became leaders of the churches, both because they had borne testimony and because they were of the Lord’s family and thanks to the establishment of peace they lived on into Trajan’s time” (Eusebius, *The History of the Church*, pp. 126-127).

The emperor questioned the grandsons about Jesus Christ and His kingdom and they told him that Christ’s kingdom would ultimately come at the end of the age and that each person would give an account and that apparently hit Domitian hard, and he stopped the persecution.

QUESTION #3 – When was Jude written?

Jude is a tough book to date. In fact, scholars disagree on when Jude was written. There is not much in it that helps us solve the issue except for the fact that there is an allusion to the fact that false teachers and false apostles and prophets had crept into the church in a way that polluted the grace faith system (**vv. 3-5, 17**).

The Apostolic grace teaching was well-known by this point so it is probably safe to conclude that Jude was written somewhere between A.D. 67-70. There is no mention of the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. It would appear that Jude was written sometime after II Peter because Jude quotes from II Peter and alludes to what Peter wrote in many places.

There are many allusions to what Peter wrote in his second epistle (**Jude 4/II Pet. 1:2-3; Jude 7/II Pet. 2:6; Jude 8/II Pet. 2:10; Jude 9/II Pet. 2:11; Jude 10/II Pet. 2:12; Jude 16/II Pet. 2:18; Jude 17-18/II Pet. 3:3**).

If we assume that II Peter was written about A.D. 65-66, a year before Peter died, we may assume that Jude was written some time later, **A.D. 67-80**. Since there is no mention of the destruction of Jerusalem, we perhaps could conclude that it was written between **A.D. 67-70**. If Jude were 20 in A.D. 30 he would be about 57 in A.D. 67 and he would be about 70 in A.D. 80.

QUESTION #4 – What is the purpose of Jude?

The purpose of Jude is to communicate to God’s people that they need to remain faithful to the faith system of salvation and contend for the faith in the face of religious groups and individuals who are religious apostates. Jude has a passion to expose heretics and apostates.

In fact, more than one commentator has said that one key thought that characterizes this epistle is to beware of apostates. D. Edmund Hiebert said this epistle is without parallel in the New Testament for its vehement denunciation of libertines and apostates” (*The Non Pauline Epistles*, p. 159).

Jude’s epistle is a very strong and negative epistle. It is a judgmental epistle, filled with “fiery indignation” against religious sensualists. These religious phonies who want to play patty cake with Sodom and Gomorrah will face the wrath of Almighty God.

This book warns and threatens against moving into areas contrary to the truth of God. This is probably why Jude has been called “the most neglected book in the New Testament.” I love what Richard Lenski said about Jude; it is “an epistle of few lines but full of strong words” (*Jude*, p. 602).

Most people in churches don’t like this book and don’t want this book. But we need to be like Jude today. We need to be front line warriors who confront and speak out against religious hypocrites. Dr. Edwin Blum said, “Contemporary culture is becoming indifferent to the question of truth” and Jude demands that we know the truth and stand for the truth and defend the truth.

QUESTION #5 – To whom was Jude written?

It is hard to actually pinpoint the identity of the initial recipients. All we really know is what we read in **verse 1**, it is written to “those who are called, who are loved by God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ.” There is an article that goes with the participle beloved, kept and called which would grammatically suggest it is a specific target.

It is possible that it was written to Christian Jews who were in Palestine because Jude uses many references to O.T. things—Egypt, Sodom and Gomorrah, Moses, Cain, Balaam, Korah, Enoch, Adam and even fallen angels.

But the data certainly suggests that this is a book written to Christians everywhere because what Jude describes here is a threat to any church.

More than likely **Jude wrote this to all believers of the Grace Age and to all the churches that had been established.**

There are lots of churches today and there are lots of steeples today and there are lots of people in churches today, but very few want this book of Jude; but in the next 7-8 weeks we are going to march right through it and may God use it to change our lives.