

Contend Earnestly For the Faith Which Was Once For All Handed Down to the Saints

An Expository Study of the **Epistle of Jude**

Chapter 6- The History of Heresy **Jude 4**

31. The History of Heresy Part 1

WOSM Monday 12/17/07

Welcome again my beloved in Jesus Christ. We are continuing our verse by verse study of the Epistle of **Jude** and today I want to begin a very fascinating examination of The History of Heresy by looking at the fourth verse of Jude- so let's read verse 4 together:

For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

For some time now I have labored in this Epistle to hopefully bring you into a deeper appreciation for the Word of God and Sound Doctrine. Now begin with today's broadcast- I am moving the study into an area of great importance to help us understand exactly why Jude was so compelled by the Holy Spirit to write this Epistle. But first, we need to learn a few definitions.

According to *The Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* edited by Walter Elwell and published by Baker Books, on page 550, the word, "heresy" is defined this way:

"The word heresy is derived from the Greek word *hairesis* and is grounded in the conviction that there exists one revealed Truth, and that other opinions are intentional distortions or denials of that one holy and heavenly Truth. Because the Christian Church holds to the teaching that Truth is revealed to man by God through Scripture- therefore all deviations from that Truth are not merely opinions but are in fact false teachings which lead people away from God's revelation."

So we can see that heresy is a perversion of Divine Truth; it is a change; a deviation from the one single, holy, and heavenly Truth that

God gave to His Own Church through Scripture.

So, from this definition, we can see that without first having the unshakable conviction that Truth exists and that we can both know Truth and learn Truth- and unless we know that there is only one source of Divine Truth- the Holy Scriptures- then heresy cannot exist. And this is what makes this kind of preaching so unpopular today. We don't like absolutes. We enjoy seeing all things- even holy things- as a kind of gray color- rather than as black and white. But by expounding on Sound Doctrine- heresy becomes apparent. By lifting up the Truth of God's Word- the lies of satan can be clearly seen. By exalting God's righteousness- Man's sins can be identified.

Now since Jude told us that we are to contend earnestly for the Faith that was once and for all delivered to the saints, and since Jude saw that the war against the Truth was a real and a serious threat against the Church- it is very important that we talk about what heresy is and what it is not.

Heresy is not about a difference in opinion or personal preference. Just because I disagree with you about something personal does not make me or you a heretic. Because you disagree with me about an issue- even an important issue of preference does not necessarily mean that you are teaching heresy. I may enjoy certain things that you do not care about. So because we simply differ on personal preferences or opinions does not mean that one of us is teaching heresy.

Sadly- history is filled with people labeling others as being a heretic simply because they did not like those people. It is also true that some people have been wrongly charged and convicted of heresy in the past because of politics or even family squabbles. But even though there have been abuses in this area in the past does not mean that heresy doesn't exist and that we are not faced with real serious heresy all the time- because it does and we are. And simply because some men have misused this term in the past does not mean that real live heretics do not exist- because they do.

When we leave the personal preference arena and we leave the personal opinion arena- and when we get into Truth- God's Truth- Objective holy Divine Truth- this is what really matters.

For example- when the prophet Samuel went into a city, the people of that city came out fearfully to meet him. They asked him, **“Do you come in peace?”** These people knew they were sinners, and they were scared to death that the Prophet of God had come to judge them. They were not

afraid of Samuel because Samuel had strong opinions. They were not afraid of Samuel because he liked a different style of music than they did. They weren't afraid of this prophet because he enjoyed chess and they enjoyed checkers. No, their problem with Samuel was not over personal preferences and subjective choices- their problem with Samuel was about Truth- God's Truth.

The people of this city knew full well that they were not walking with God and their guilt made them unhappy when God's man came near. They asked Samuel to leave because they didn't want to hear the Word of the Lord- not because they didn't believe him- they wanted him to leave precisely because they knew he was from God and that he was right.

When Jesus cast two thousand demons out of the man in the tombs in **Luke 8**, the Gadarenes were not grateful that a man was set free; they didn't rejoice because a demon possessed man had been delivered- the Kingdom of God had been manifested right before their eyes and they were unhappy. How could this be? The people of this city didn't want Jesus to see *their* sin- so they asked the Savior to leave.

Today Jeremiah and Isaiah have statues built in their honor over in Israel- but when they were alive- when they thundered with the Voice of God- they were outcasts and scorned and laughed at and ridiculed by the Jews.

But what these prophets said was true. Israel had indeed backslid. The altar of Baal had replaced the altar of the God that made heaven and earth; the people were sinful; the House of God was empty, and the worship of God was a farce. And while today the names of these great prophets bring a reverential hush to our voices- they were universally despised in the day of their ministry.

Isaiah was placed between two boards and sawed in half. Jeremiah was hung up by his thumbs in a latrine. Why were these men so persecuted by the people of God? Because they called the nation to repentance and cried for them to tear down the altars of Baal and to return to the God of their Fathers and to serve the living God.

My Christian friends, during the two thousand year history of the Church, there have been many attempts to destroy the Faith by bringing in false teachings and heresies by men who did so intentionally. Jude said here in verse 4 that these false teachers "**crept in**". They infiltrated and snuck into the Church. They came in disguise and under false pretenses.

And the Bible says that they came into the Church for the express purpose to tear up the Church. They came to defeat the Gospel. They came to change and to mangle the Word of the Lord and lead people astray.

How did these men sneak in? How did they have the ability to fly in under the radar and get into the House of God and begin to teach their heresies and to attract a following? Well, the only way for a thief to sneak in is for the man of the House to be asleep. Jesus told us about this in **Matthew 13:24-30**:

24 Jesus presented another parable to them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field.

25 "But while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went away.

26 "But when the wheat sprouted and bore grain, then the tares became evident also.

27 "The slaves of the landowner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?'

28 "And he said to them, 'An enemy has done this!' The slaves said to him, 'Do you want us, then, to go and gather them up?'

29 "But he said, 'No; for while you are gathering up the tares, you may uproot the wheat with them.

30 'Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn."'"

Now I was taught and many of you have been taught that having tares in the Church is simply inevitable. But that is not what the Bible says here. The Bible says that **“while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat”**. So, we can easily see that the enemy comes into the Church and sows tares among the wheat- while men sleep; while the leaders of that Church fall asleep; while the pastor and elders of that church are not on the wall watching; while they are comatose; while there are unconscious.

Jesus said that once the tares are sown- we have to wait until the time of the harvest and it will take God to remove them- but if the leaders of the church do not fall asleep at the wheel; if they do not slumber; if they stay alert and stay awake and guard the sheep and watch for the enemy- then tares do not have to come into the church to begin with.

Our God given responsibility as leaders in the Church is to watch and pray precisely so that tares and false teachers and false doctrine won't come into the Church to begin with. Our solemn duty as Pastors is not to build up our ministry on the backs of the people; neither is it to help make the people feel good about themselves- but our solemn and holy calling is to confront the people of God with the Word of God so that they can see what God says and repent and be saved. We must help them acknowledge their own sin and to confess that sin and to come into right standing with God. We are told over and over in Scripture that we are to watch for their souls; we are to love and guide them; and we are to live our lives in such a way as to provoke them to jealousy.

We must be faithful to warn them when the enemy is coming. We must cry out against carnality and lukewarmness. We must preach against the natural tendency of all men to slack up and wither away and die. We are to prod and provoke and encourage and edify and teach and preach and listen and correct and rebuke and exhort and lead the people of God and to present them to God as a chaste virgin- clean and white and pure and undefiled.

So when you hear and read or learn about some "new thing" that promises a new and improved version of the Truth; when some new revelation of peace and safety and prosperity comes from the pillow prophets; when another new and fresh wave of scriptural comprehension comes from the modern snake oil salesmen- we who are watchmen on the walls of the Church must be faithful to discern this so-called "new thing" to make sure that it lines up with the "first thing"- that it is in accord with the ancient and timeless Truths of the Word of God- and that means that we must examine what is written and spoken and taught and we must analyze what they are saying and we must shine the light of God's Truth on it to see if it stands the test of Scripture. And if it does- we must commend it- but if it doesn't- we must be faithful to denounce it and cry out against it and show why. And like Paul and John and Peter- we must name names and we must be specific and we must clearly sound the trumpet so that the people may know how to prepare themselves for battle.

And because we live in a day when tolerance holds more virtue in people's minds than does holy and divine Truth- we will be criticized for doing this. We will be called hard and mean and legalistic and unloving and uncaring and dictatorial and every name in the book except what we

really are and that is faithful. Hear the Word of the Lord in **Ezekiel 3:17-21**

17 "Son of man, I have appointed you a watchman to the house of Israel; whenever you hear a word from My mouth, warn them from Me.

18 "When I say to the wicked, 'You will surely die,' and you do not warn him or speak out to warn the wicked from his wicked way that he may live, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand.

19 "Yet if you have warned the wicked and he does not turn from his wickedness or from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered yourself.

20 "Again, when a righteous man turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and I place an obstacle before him, he will die; since you have not warned him, he shall die in his sin, and his righteous deeds which he has done shall not be remembered; but his blood I will require at your hand.

21 "However, if you have warned the righteous man that the righteous should not sin and he does not sin, he shall surely live because he took warning; and you have delivered yourself."

Well, I'm out of time for today- but please join me on the next broadcast as we continue our Journey through the Epistle of **Jude**. May God help us all.

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