

# **Contend for the Faith**

## **The Existence of False Teaching**

*Jude 14-19*

**Rev. Freddy Fritz**

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# The Existence of False Teaching

## Scripture

The Letter of Jude deals with the subject of false teaching, which is the greatest danger to the Church of Jesus Christ today.

As we study Jude 14-19 today, we will see how Jude acknowledges the existence of false teaching. Let's read Jude 14-19:

**<sup>14</sup> It was also about these that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of his holy ones, <sup>15</sup> to execute judgment on all and to convict all the ungodly of all their deeds of ungodliness that they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against him." <sup>16</sup> These are grumblers, malcontents, following their own sinful desires; they are loud-mouthed boasters, showing favoritism to gain advantage.**

**<sup>17</sup> But you must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>18</sup> They said to you, "In the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions." <sup>19</sup> It is these who cause divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit. (Jude 14-19)**

## Introduction

Last week I mentioned that Martin Downes defined *heresy* as "any teaching that directly contradicts the clear and direct witness of the Scriptures on a point of salvific importance."<sup>1</sup> In other words, heresy is the kind of doctrinal error that completely redefines the gospel.

The first known usage of the term "heresy" in a civil legal context was in 380 AD by the "Edict of Thessalonica" of Theodosius I. Prior to the issuance of this edict, the Church had no state-

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Downes, *Risking the Truth: Handling Error in the Church* (Geanies House, Fearn, Ross-shire: Christian Focus Publications, 2009), 21.

sponsored support for any particular legal mechanism to counter what it perceived as “heresy.” By this edict, in some senses, the line between the Christian Church and the Roman State was blurred. One of the outcomes of this blurring of Church and State was a sharing of State powers of legal enforcement between Church and State authorities. At its most extreme reach, this new Church authority of legal enforcement gave Church leaders the power to pronounce the death sentence upon those whom they might perceive to be “heretics.”

Within 5 years of the official “criminalization” of heresy by the emperor, the first Christian heretic, Priscillian, was executed in 385 AD by Roman officials.

For some years after the Reformation, Protestant Churches were known to execute those whom they considered as heretics. For example, we think of the infamous Salem Witch Trials in Salem, Massachusetts, in 1692-1693 in which 19 people were hanged.

The last known heretic executed by sentence of the Roman Catholic Church was Cayetano Ripoll in 1826.

The number of people executed as heretics under the authority of the various “church authorities” is not known. However, it most certainly numbers into the several thousands.<sup>2</sup>

Today we no longer execute heretics. However, that does not mean that heretics no longer exist. In fact, they still do exist. They have always existed, and they will continue to exist.

## Review

It is because of the existence of heretics and false teaching that Jude wrote this letter.

Jude began to write this marvelous letter to believers to encourage them with the wonderful truths “about our common salvation” (v. 3a). However, he “found it necessary to write appealing to

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<sup>2</sup> Accessed on June 5, 2010 at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian\\_heresy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_heresy).

[the believers] to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints” (v. 3b).

Why? Because word had reached Jude that false teachers had “crept in unnoticed.” They perverted the grace of God into sensuality and denied the deity of Jesus by their character, their conduct, and their creed (v. 4).

Jude said that God’s attitude toward false teachers was displayed in implacable judgment. He pointed to God’s attitude in his judgment of unbelieving individuals, rebellious angels, and sinful communities (vv. 5-7).

Jude then gave a description of false teachers. He said that false teachers were immoral (they “defile the flesh”), insubordinate (they “reject authority”), and irreverent (they “blaspheme the glorious ones”) (vv. 8-10).

Further, Jude said that false teachers disobeyed God (v. 11a), they influenced others to disobey God (v. 11b), and they led a full rebellion against God (11c).

He compared false teachers to five natural phenomena: hidden reefs (v. 12a), waterless clouds (v. 12b), fruitless autumn trees (v. 12c), wild sea waves (v. 13a), and wandering stars (v. 13b).

## Lesson

In our lesson today, Jude discusses the existence of false teaching.

### I. False Teaching Existed in Ancient Times (14-15)

First, false teaching existed in ancient times.

Jude said in Jude 14-15, **“It was also about these that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, ‘Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of his holy ones, to execute judgment on all and to convict all the ungodly of all their deeds of ungodliness that they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spo-**

**ken against him.”**

Who are the **“these”** that Jude referred to? Last week I mentioned that Jude used the word **“these”** or “these people” six times in his letter (in vv. 8, 10, 12, 14, 16, 19). And **“these”** referred to **these** false teachers.

So, it was about **these** false teachers **that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied. Enoch** was a **seventh** generation descendant **from Adam**.

**Enoch** was considered a hero among the Jewish people because, like Elijah later (2 Kings 2:11-12), he did not die but went directly to heaven. Genesis 5:24 says, “Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him.”

Interestingly, the earliest recorded prophecy in Scripture is found in Genesis 3:15, where God said to the serpent, “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.” This prophecy is known as the *protevangelion*, which is the first announcement of the gospel.

Enoch’s prophecy is the second-earliest recorded prophecy in Scripture. Enoch’s prophecy predated the words of Moses, Samuel, and the other Jewish prophets by many centuries.

But Enoch’s prophecy is noted for the first time here in Jude 14. We do not find it in earlier Scriptures. Jude said **that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, “Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of his holy ones, to execute judgment on all and to convict all the ungodly of all their deeds of ungodliness that they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against him.”** That’s the prophecy.

So, if this prophecy was not recorded earlier in Scripture, where did Jude get it from?

Jude extracted the quote from the pseudepigraphal book of *I Enoch* 1:9,<sup>3</sup> with which his first-century readers were well ac-

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<sup>3</sup> *Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, ed. Robert Henry Charles (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 2004), Enoch 1:9.

quainted. Even though the pseudepigraphal books were “spurious writings, especially writings falsely attributed to biblical characters or times,”<sup>4</sup> the book was part of the written history and tradition of the Jewish people, and rabbinical allusions to it were common. The Holy Spirit inspired Jude to use it because it was familiar, historically valid, and supported his overall thesis.

Though he was not the author of the book, Enoch’s message was passed down through oral tradition until it was finally recorded in what was called *1 Enoch*. That book, like other books such as *The Book of Jubilee*, *The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*, and *The Assumption of Moses* (from which Jude probably quoted in v. 9), was not part of the Old Testament canon. Yet, since it was accurate, it was acceptable for Jude to use it to bolster his argument.

Even the apostle Paul occasionally followed the same pattern (of citing nonbiblical sources to make a legitimate spiritual point) in his teaching (cf. Acts 17:28; 1 Corinthians 15:33; Titus 1:12).<sup>5</sup>

Now back to the prophecy. Notice the emphasis on “**ungodly.**” Four times in this prophecy the words “**ungodly**” or “**ungodliness**” are used. Here it is again, “**Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of his holy ones, to execute judgment on all and to convict all the *ungodly* of all their deeds of *ungodliness* that they have committed in such an *ungodly* way, and of all the harsh things that *ungodly* sinners have spoken against him.**”

What Jude is saying is that God will severely judge and punish the ungodly, especially those who are false teachers.

So, false teaching existed in ancient times.

## II. False Teaching Exists in the Present (16)

Second, false teaching exists in the present.

Jude said in Jude 16, “**These are grumblers, malcontents, following their own sinful desires; they are loud-mouthed**

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<sup>4</sup> pseudepigrapha. Dictionary.com. *The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition*. Houghton Mifflin Company, 2004. <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/pseudepigrapha> (accessed: June 05, 2010).

<sup>5</sup> John MacArthur, *2 Peter and Jude* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2005), 188.

**boasters, showing favoritism to gain advantage.”**

Once again Jude referred to **these** false teachers in verse 16. **These** false teachers are those heretics who existed at the time that Jude was writing.

Jude looked particularly at the sins that came out of their mouths.

**Grumblers** occurs only here in the New Testament and is the same term the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament) uses to describe Israel’s grumbling against God (Exodus 16:7-9; Numbers 14:27, 29). Like the ancient Israelites, these false teachers were **grumblers** against the truth and the Word of God.

Further, these false teachers were **malcontents**. The word translated **malcontent** (*mempsimoiros*) means “constantly blaming” or “fault-finding.”<sup>6</sup> **Malcontents** describe those who are perpetually discontent and dissatisfied. They complain and find fault with God’s perfect purpose and plan.

In a self-centered manner, the false teachers were at odds with God because they were **following their own sinful desires**. This New Testament phrase commonly described the unconverted (cf. v. 18; 2 Peter 3:3).

These false teachers were so dominated by self that **they** were **loud-mouthed boasters**, or as the *New King James Version* renders the expression, they used “great swelling words.” They pompously puffed themselves up with an elaborate, sophisticated religious vocabulary that had an external spiritual tone and attractiveness but was void of divine truth and substance.

By such speech they were also **showing favoritism to gain advantage**. These false teachers were good at telling people what they wanted them to hear (cf. 2 Timothy 4:3-4), cleverly manipulating others for their own gain. They certainly did not care about proclaiming God’s truth for the edification of their hearers (cf. Psalm 5:9; 12:2-3; Proverbs 26:28; 29:5; Romans 3:13; 16:18).

It was Jesus who said that “what comes out of the mouth

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<sup>6</sup> Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, vol. 1, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament : Based on Semantic Domains*, electronic ed. of the 2nd edition. (New York: United Bible societies, 1996), 437.

proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person” (Matthew 15:18). In the case of false teachers, their lips revealed their grumbling, discontent, sinful desires, boasting, and favoritism. Their mouths betrayed the wickedness of their hearts. And God will also judge these false teachers who existed in the time of Jude.<sup>7</sup>

So, false teaching existed in ancient times. And false teaching exists in the present.

### III. False Teaching Will Exist in the Future (17-19)

And third, false teaching will exist in the future.

Jude said in Jude 17-19, **“But you must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. They said to you, ‘In the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions.’ It is these who cause divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit.”**

Even though Jude a short letter, this is now the third time that he reminded his readers that false teachers pose a constant threat. He did so in verses 5-7 and again in verses 11-13.

Jude now wanted his readers to **remember the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

Actually, **Jesus** was the first one in the New Testament to warn against false teachers. He said in Matthew 7:15, “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves.”

And then **the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ** also warned against false teachers. For example, when Paul defended his apostleship to the Corinthians, he said in 2 Corinthians 11:12-15:

<sup>12</sup> And what I do I will continue to do, in order to undermine the claim of those who would like to claim that in their boasted mission they work on the same terms as we do. <sup>13</sup> For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. <sup>14</sup> And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself

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<sup>7</sup> John MacArthur, *2 Peter and Jude* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2005), 190-91.



as an angel of light. <sup>15</sup> So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds.

Similarly, the apostle Peter warned in 2 Peter 2:1, “But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction.”

Jesus and the apostles repeatedly warned that false teachers would infiltrate the church and oppose the truth. That is why Jude said, “**They said to you, ‘In the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions.’**” The technical phrase “**the last time**” does not refer to the period just prior to Jesus’ second visit to Earth. No, it refers to the entire period between his ascension and his return to Earth.

Then Jude noted that **it is these false teachers who cause divisions, who are worldly people, and are devoid of the Spirit.** That is an accurate description of false teachers.

So, false teaching existed in ancient times. False teaching exists in the present. And false teaching will exist in the future.

## Conclusion

Jude has been very clear that God will judge false teachers. Ultimately, false teachers, along with all non-Christians will go to hell. Hell is certainly not a popular concept in Western society. In an age of tolerance and acceptance, the topic of eternal punishment is taboo; the very mention of it is considered unloving. After all, postmodern culture believes that everyone is basically good and expects that life after death (if the afterlife even exists) includes heaven for all but the most evil people.

Sadly, the political correctness and doctrinal ambiguity that characterizes the world has also permeated the church. Even among those who call themselves evangelicals, hell is regarded as

a theological embarrassment. Passages that teach eternal destruction are often explained away, arbitrarily softened, or ignored altogether. As a result, society's erroneous views about God's judgment are only reinforced.

In stark contrast to the contemporary ambiguity, God's Word is unabashedly straightforward about the reality of divine judgment (cf. Genesis 6-8; Deuteronomy 28:15-68; Isaiah 1; 3; 5; 13-23; Jeremiah 2-9; 46-51; Ezekiel 20:33-44; 25-32; Joel 3:12-16; Zechariah 12:2, 9; 14:2; Malachi 3:2-6; Matthew 12:36; 25:31-46; Luke 12:48; Romans 14:10-12; 1 Corinthians 3:12-15; 5:5; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Galatians 6:7; Colossians 3:24-25; Revelation 6-20). Throughout its pages, themes of divine retribution, depicted in both temporal and eternal punishment, are impossible to miss. That God has judged, is judging, and will judge sinners, both with death and eternal punishment, is unmistakable. The New Testament's treatment of future judgment is especially clear and includes at least six primary features.

First, the final aspect of God's divine wrath relates to a specific future event—namely, the second coming of Jesus Christ. At the end of the age, the Lord will return to earth to execute judgment: “He has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead” (Acts 17:31). No human knows the exact hour or day of the second coming—only the Father knows (Matthew 24:36). But he has fixed the precise moment when his Son will return, an event which he promises will occur quickly (Revelation 22:7, 12, 20).

Second, this judgment will be general and public. When Jesus returns, there will be a judgment when all God's enemies from every age will be brought before him for final sentencing (Revelation 20:7-15).

Third, God's judgment will be just and impartial (Romans 2:11; Galatians 2:6; cf. Genesis 18:25).

Fourth, the promise of divine judgment is intended as a warning. The Lord designed it to produce fear of his wrath as Jesus

warned in Matthew 10:28, “And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.” By warning people of his wrath, God graciously offers the lost an opportunity to repent (cf. 2 Peter 3:9).

Fifth, God’s judgment is based on his law (Deuteronomy 27:26; Romans 2:12; 3:19).

Finally, God’s judgment against the wicked ultimately results in eternal damnation in hell. Jesus said in Matthew 13:40-42, “Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the close of the age. The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

Jude previously pointed out that these false teachers “long ago were designated for this condemnation” (v. 4; cf. vv. 6, 13). Verses 14-19 reaffirm that truth and the truth of all the other New Testament judgment passages that precede it. The passage underscores the fact that false teaching existed in ancient times, it exists in the present, and it will exist in the future. But the Lord will come and execute judgment on deserving recipients of that judgment.<sup>8</sup>

But there is hope for those who will turn from their sin and trust in Jesus Christ alone for the gift of salvation. If you have never done so, I urge you to do so today—before it is too late. Amen.

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<sup>8</sup> John MacArthur, *2 Peter and Jude* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2005), 183-87.



# Mission Statement

The Mission Statement of the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church is:

*To bring people to Jesus Christ  
and **membership** in his church family,  
develop them to Christlike **maturity**,  
equip them for their **ministry** in the church  
and life **mission** in the world,  
in order to **magnify** God's name.*

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## Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church (PCA)

*Answers for Life!*

Address: 19911 Bruce B. Downs Blvd., Tampa, FL 33647

Telephone: (813) 973-2484

Fax: (813) 973-4673

Email: [Office@TampaBayPresbyterian.org](mailto:Office@TampaBayPresbyterian.org)

Web site: [www.TampaBayPresbyterian.org](http://www.TampaBayPresbyterian.org)

**PRAAYER:**

You have given us your Word, Father. And it is the Word of truth.

Help us to recognize that false teaching existed in the past, it does exist in the present, and it will exist in the future.

Help each one of us here today to recognize false teachers so that we are not duped by their heretical teaching. And help us also to commit ourselves to the truth.

And all of this I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

**CHARGE:**

**To you who are called, beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ:**

**May mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you. Amen.**