

Off the Shelf

Sunday School Lesson

Jude

Introduction

The early church Christian scholar Origen said that Jude is brief but “full of the mighty words of heavenly grace.” The author of this book is the half-brother of Jesus. It was probably written between 67-70AD. This letter was written to expose false teachers and to describe their doom. It also exhorts believers to stand firm in their faith in Jesus.

Greeting (1:1-2)

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: Mercy, peace and love be yours in abundance.

1. Jude begins by identifying himself as a servant of Jesus. *What does this tell you about how he views himself as a Christian? What is the proper attitude that Christians should have about their identity?* (Prov 15:33, 22:4; Gal 2:20)
2. Jude also says that he is the brother of James. This supports the view that he is the half-brother of Jesus. Jude asserts this to clearly identify himself as someone of authority. He does not claim to be an apostle but he is a leader in the early church. Jude mentions his relationship to Jesus as his Lord before his relationship to James. This indicates his belief that his faith in Jesus was more important than family relationships. *Has your faith in Jesus been tested or strengthened by family relationships?*
3. Born-again Christians have been called by God through the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Those who are genuine Christians have been chosen for salvation. This is entirely by the will of God and not through human effort. (Eph 2:8-9).
4. Genuine Christians also are made holy through faith in Jesus. They are also kept eternally secure because God’s call and his work of salvation can’t be changed. (Jn 10:27-29; 1 Cor 1:2; Col 3:12; 1 Pet 2:9)
5. Mercy, peace and love are foundations in the experience of born-again Christians.

Jude reminds them of the blessings they have experienced. This is another way to identify and affirm those who are genuine Christians.

- A. God grants mercy to Christians who accept the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross for their sins. The blood of Jesus satisfies the wrath of God for those who are covered by it. Thus, God pardons sins and grants mercy instead of punishment. (Jn 3:16-18; Rom 8:1-4)
- B. Peace with God comes from being adopted into his family. This peace enables us to call God our Father and we are eternally secure in this relationship. (Jn 1:12-13; Rom 8:15-16)
- C. We are loved by God. This love is a consuming fire that motivates us to love God and teaches us how to love others. (Gal 5:6; 1 Th 1:3)

Warning About False Teachers (1:3-4)

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. For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. 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.

1. Jude writes because he wants believers to hold fast to the fundamentals of the gospel. They must not compromise or change their views on the teachings of their faith based on the holy scriptures (Bible). These teaching were delivered once for all by the apostles. Jude says that Christians are to stand up for their faith and be ready to share the gospel. (2 Tim 2:24-26; 1 Pet 3:15) *How are we to share our faith? Why is the manner of our sharing as important as correctly sharing the gospel?*
2. The history of Israel and Christianity have many examples of false teachers who came from within these communities. The stories of Cain, Korah, Jezebel and many false prophets demonstrate the wrath of God against people who have promoted their own ways instead of obeying God. *What are some examples of false Christian teachers who left to start their own religions?*
3. False teachers appear to be moral and persuasive but they are clearly godless or without God when they deny Jesus. *What are some ways that false teachers have changed the truths about Jesus?*

Examples of Failures of Faith (1:5-7)

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. 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. 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.

1. The Israelites were delivered from the bondage of Egypt by God who demonstrated this through miracles. God provided for them in the desert through more miracles. However, when their faith was tested in God's command to enter the Promised Land they failed. They listened to the spies who counselled against having faith rather than Caleb. (Num 13-14) As a result, that generation of Israelites died in the desert and did not enter the Promised Land. (Dt 1:26-36; Heb 3:16-19) This is an example of how a few false leaders can influence many people and lead them away from holding to the revealed instructions of God. Therefore, it is important to study the Bible. (Ps 25:4-5; 119:10-11)
2. Some angels also rebelled against God. They left their assigned places of authority because they coveted something else that they thought was better. The devil led this rebellion because he wanted to be like God. (Is 14:12-15; 2 Pet 2: 1-7)
3. Some of the angels corrupted themselves through disobedience. Likewise, the people of Sodom and Gomorrah corrupted themselves through homosexual and other perverse practices. God destroyed them because of this. Jude says that those who promote such perverse sexual practices will suffer eternal torment. (Gen 19:24-25) *What are some examples of how the world and false religions have contradicted the Bible?*

False Teachers Described (1:8-13)

In the very same way, these dreamers pollute their own bodies, reject authority and slander celestial beings. But even the archangel Michael when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against him, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!" Yet these men speak abusively against whatever they do not understand; and what things they do understand by instinct, like unreasoning animals—these are the very things that destroy them. Woe to them! They have taken the way of Cain; they have rushed for profit into Balaam's error; they have

been destroyed in Korah's rebellion. These men are blemishes at your love feasts, eating with you without the slightest qualm—shepherds who feed only themselves. They are clouds without rain, blown along by the wind; autumn trees, without fruit and uprooted—twice dead. They are wild waves of the sea, foaming up their shame; wandering star, for whom the blackest darkness has been reserved forever.

1. False teachers are called dreamers because they believe in thoughts that come from their imagination or from evil sources. By accepting these ideas and promoting them, they corrupt themselves. They reject or alter the authoritative words of God as taught in the Bible. In this way, they promote false ideas and speak falsehoods about God and his angels.
2. Jude says that false teachers lack humility and respect for God and angels. They elevate themselves to a superior status among men. They speak with arrogance and pride about spiritual things. They are without knowledge and like animals relying on instincts.
3. Jude mentions Cain, Balaam and Korah as examples of false teachers who rejected God's will. *In what ways did they rebel against God?* (Gen 4: 3-8; Num 16:1-35; 24:10-25)
4. The Bible says that those who teach will be judged for what they say. Therefore, false teachers will be punished severely for deceiving others. (Jas 3:1) They contradict God's truths revealed in the Bible. They make promises and promote ideas that they know are false. *What are some of the false promises made by some Christian denominations today?*

More Signs of False Teachers (1:14-19)

Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men: "See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him." These men are grumblers and faultfinders; they follow their own evil desires; they boast about themselves and flatter others for their own advantage. But, dear friends, remember what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ foretold. They said to you, "In the last times there will be scoffers who will follow their own ungodly desires." These are the men who divide you, who follow mere natural instincts and do not have the Spirit.

1. Jesus will appear in glory with born again Christians. He will judge everyone and condemn those who do not put their faith in him. (Rev 19:11-16; 20:11-15) *What is*

the difference in how Jesus judges Christians versus unbelievers? (1 Cor 3:12-15)

2. *Why do those who do not believe in Jesus tend to be unhappy and complain about many things? What makes Christians grateful and aware of God's abundant blessings?*
3. Jude says that ungodly people tend to find fault with others while they think highly of themselves. They live to maximize the pleasures of life and promote sexual promiscuity. They also use flattery to gain wealth, influence and friends. You can tell what is important to people by what they focus on. Ungodly people are evident by what consumes their attention. Those who tend to complain, belittle others, boast about themselves, talk excessively about food, sex or other pleasures are ungodly people.
4. Jude further says that ungodly people tend to be arrogant. They dismiss the deity of Jesus and belittle those who believe in spiritual things. They cause divisions by gathering with those who think like them and excluding others. They believe that science will eventually make religion obsolete. (Col 2:4; 1 Tim 4:1-3; 2 Tim 3:1-7)

Christian Conduct (1:20-23)

But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit. Keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life. Be merciful to those who doubt; snatch others from the fire and save them; to others show mercy, mixed with fear—hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh.

1. *How do Christians build themselves up in their faith? (Col 2: 4-8; 2 Tim 2:14-18)*
2. Jude says that it is important to pray "in the Holy Spirit." *What does this mean? Does this differ from reciting prayers?*
3. Christians are to make it a priority to live in an intimate love relationship with Jesus. This is maintained by praying often, seeking his will and obeying his commands. Sins are to be repented of and amends made so that there are no barriers to fellowship with God. (1 Jn 1:5-10)
4. It is God's mercy given by faith in Jesus that brings eternal life. This happens by the will of God alone. He chooses those to whom he wishes to give mercy. Jesus is the savior and the Holy Spirit makes men holy. This is God's work alone and so he is worthy of all praise and honor. (Eph 2:8-10; Titus 3:4-7)

5. Jude says that we are to use different approaches with those who are following false teachings. We should be kind and use gentle persuasion with those who are uncertain or have doubts. (1 Pet 3:16-17) Those who become defensive and begin to embrace false teachings should be removed from the fellowship with the hope that they will repent and return. (2 Ths 3:14-15) Christians are to keep away from those who are hardened in false beliefs and actively recruit others. (2 Cor 6:14-18) Jude says that the corruption of these people is deep and intimate like the pollution of their innermost garments.

Conclusion (1:24-25)

To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy—to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.

1. Jude concludes by reminding Christians that God is all powerful and so is able to do everything we need. He saves us, makes us holy, gives us joy and love. (Isa 26:3; 2 Tim 1:12-13; Phil 3:20-21; Heb 7:25)
2. The word “worship” is derived from Old English “worth-ship.” (meaning the condition of being worthy or deserving; worthiness) God is worshipped because of his superior nature, power, authority and wisdom, (and is worthy of our worship). Those who are false teachers and unbelievers try to diminish or reject these attributes of God. Christians wholly embrace them and are content to praise and adore him; marveling at such a glorious and loving God.