

Contend for the Faith

REVIEW: As we have marched through this little gem that often gets passed over at the back of our Bibles, we are seeing just how relevant the Scriptures are today as they were when they were written. That is one criticism that Christians often face, that the Bible is not relevant today. One big fat lie if you asked me.

Jude has been going after the false teachers that have “secretly slipped in among” them. Jude has not approached this in a polite fashion, but has really ripped into these guys that are causing such problems in the church. I have said this before and I will say it again that in our day and age, we have stripped Christianity down into a sticky sweet version of what it really is. It is okay to call sin, sin, and to call people out that are promoting sin.

INTRO: Today we head into the next several verses of Jude. We will watch as Jude contrasts the false teachers behavior, with what he expects from those he is writing to. We will also go over briefly the problem of this passage - in fact, the problem is where we will begin.

Jude 17-23

I. The problem in Jude

A. We do not talk a lot about textual criticism around here and in part, for good reason

1. It is a very specific discipline of biblical studies
2. To truly master the art takes years, and very good instincts
3. Yet today we need to address it at least briefly

B. Textual criticism deals with taking the many manuscripts we have of the Bible, and determining what the original manuscript would have looked like

1. To begin with, we do not have ANY original manuscripts
 - a) For those that want to attack the Bible on that point, we do not have any original manuscripts of any other ancient document either
2. We do, however, have more manuscript evidence to go off of for the NT than any other ancient documents
 - a) More than 5000 various manuscripts
 - b) There are a few that are complete, many that are fragments, some as small as a single verse or sentence
 - c) Furthermore, the manuscripts that we have date as little as 80 years from the original writings
 - (1) Compared to other ancient documents, the gap is about 720 years
 - (2) This means that our documents are closer to the original than any other ancient manuscripts

Contend for the Faith

(3) So imagine that you are playing the game telephone where you repeat a phrase or draw a picture that goes from person to person

(a) The person at the end usually does not resemble the person at the beginning

(b) So the closer to the original you get, the better it will be that the phrase or drawing is accurate to the original

C. What makes the job so difficult is determining how the copies all fit together

1. So for example, if five of you took notes on my sermon today

a) Let's say there was a group of 30 of you that were dedicated and wanted sermon notes too but you were gone, so you start finding someone that did take notes

(1) Some of you copy from one of the original five

(2) Some of you copy from your friend that copied from the original five

b) What this gives us is 35 copies of sermon notes

2. For the textual critic, they have to determine how all the copies fit together, and what was originally said

3. You see how this can get confusing quickly

4. Without getting too detailed here, they would evaluate external evidence

a) Things like the number of copies, or families of copies

b) They also would look at internal evidence

(1) Things like other sermons they might have record of from me

(2) Speech patterns that I use

(3) Topics that I discuss often

5. The reason I bring this up is to help you understand a little of how the NT was put together from the manuscripts we have because it effects the book of Jude

a) We have a limited amount of manuscripts from Jude so the scholars had to wade through all of the evidence to come to the conclusion about what Jude actually said

D. And so that we do not leave here feeling worried about the trustworthiness of our Bibles, let me give you some reassurance

1. We have far more evidence for the text of the NT than any other ancient book

2. The vast majority of differences in the manuscripts comes down to spelling or grammatical differences - they do not affect the message of the text

3. The fact is that even with differences in how versions of the Bible were put together (the KJV used 50 m. and the NRSV used 5000) they agree in over 99% of what they say.

Contend for the Faith

II. Jude circles back around in this section to the purpose of his letter

A. In fact, these verses parallel the opening verses quite well

B. The long negative section is about to come to a close as he gets back to the main purpose which is positively influencing the readers on how they should respond to the situation they are in

III. Jude begins by reminding the readers of what the Apostles taught - 17-19

A. Jude starts by address a contrast with the words “dear friends” or Beloved

1. It is a strong construction in Greek

2. It really brings out the contrast between the former verses and what is to come

B. Jude wants his readers to remember

1. This parallels what he said in verse 5 about reminding them of the past

2. The word for “remember” in Greek includes the mind and the will

a) In other words, the remembering is to change the way think or behave

b) It’s like saying “You remember what happened to the boy who cried wolf”

(1) You are expecting a change of behavior

3. They are to remember what the apostles foretold

a) This does not seem to be referring to things they had written

b) Otherwise he probably would have phrased it about what they had written, or what the Scriptures said by the Apostles

C. The Apostles foretold of scoffers that follow their own ungodly desires

1. We have no prophecy using these words, except 2 Peter 3:3 comes close

2. He is speaking of the Apostles (plural), meaning more than one talked about this

a) In that case we have several warnings

b) Paul, Matthew, even Jesus Himself

3. These scoffers probably are scoffing at God and His moral requirements

a) The verses before this were about their haughty attitude and lifestyle

b) The end of the prophecy is about following their ungodly desires

(1) And notice the repetition of the word ungodly

(2) That is Jude’s biggest accusation against them

D. Again Jude goes back in talking about the false teachers with the phrase “these men”

1. The first thing he points out is these men “divide you”

a) One of the most obvious results of false teaching is division

b) Sadly, some people are so ready to look for new teaching that they disregard the anchors of doctrine they should be holding onto

(1) This is why it is so important to know our doctrine

(2) It is the foundation for the Christian life

Contend for the Faith

- (3) Sadly too many people hear the word doctrine and pull out the pillow
 - (4) Doctrine need not be a bore, it should be exciting to make the connections to our firm foundation
 - 2. The second thing he says is these men follow their natural instincts
 - a) It means that these men are focused only on their desires for this world
 - b) They value what the world values
 - 3. The final thing he adds about these men (again in threes) They do not have the Spirit
 - a) This may have been irony at the false teacher's own claims
 - b) They may have been claiming to be spiritual, and Jude is unmasking them that they do not have the Spirit, so how can they be spiritual
- IV. Jude then calls on his readers to keep themselves in God's love as they reach out to those affected by the false teaching v.20-23
- A. "Dear friends" shows Jude's affection and that he is turning his attention to his readers again
 - B. These next four verses give us our overall response to false teaching
 - 1. First, secure your own spiritual position
 - 2. Second, engage those that have drifted as a result of the false teaching
 - C. First we secure our own spiritual position - v. 20-21
 - 1. There are actually four commands in verse 20-21, but the NIV rendering does not make this clear
 - 2. Before we go over each command, notice that two Christian triads are observed in these verses - faith, hope and love; and Father Son, and HS
 - 3. The first command - build yourselves up in your most holy faith
 - a) Remember this is written to a group, so the idea of building up the faith takes on a strong meaning for the community
 - b) So Christians are, together, supposed to encourage each other to hold fast to the truth of Christ and live the life of a believer
 - c) The word "faith" here is referring to the core of what we believe
 - (1) Its not about trying to generate more feelings of belief
 - 4. The second command is "praying in the Holy Spirit"
 - a) The word should actually be "by" not "and" - it suggests that the way we build ourselves up is through prayer
 - b) Praying in the Spirit is as simple as praying anything in Jesus name - for what is at the heart of God - which we know because of His Word
 - 5. The third command is keep yourselves in God's love
 - a) If you remember, earlier in this book Jude said that we are kept by Christ

Contend for the Faith

- b) This is not a contradictory statement - it is one of those areas displaying the divine initiative and our human response
- c) If you recall, Jesus said it first asking for us to, "Remain in My love"
- 6. The last command is wait for the mercy of our Lord
 - a) Jude is encouraging his readers to look beyond the false teachers to the expression of Christ's mercy on the day He comes back in glory to bring eternal life
- D. Now we see how we engage those affected by the teaching - v. 22-23
 - 1. First secure your own faith
 - a) A necessary measure
 - b) Brings to mind verses like, "You who are spiritual restore such a one, but take heed unless you fall"
 - c) We need to stand strong in our faith before we engage others that are struggling
 - 2. First they are to be merciful to those who doubt
 - a) These seem to be Christians in the community that are somewhat swayed by the false teaching
 - b) They seem to waver in their commitment to the "faith once for all entrusted to the saints."
 - c) Sadly, the church does not have a great track record for allowing people to display doubt
 - (1) Too often those people are shunned
 - (2) Or worse yelled at for being unfaithful
 - (3) But Jude insists that they deserve mercy
 - d) To be more specific, these people may be more easily influenced by other denominational teaching, or even some cults that pose as Christians
 - (1) These folks may be strongly tempted toward certain sins - like getting involved in sex outside of marriage
 - (2) As long as they are still questioning, Jude tells us to have mercy, not to shun or mistreat them
 - 3. The second group are those that need to be saved by snatching them from the fire
 - a) These folks seem to have walked the road with the false teachers so far that they are in danger of eternal separation from God - that is what the biblical metaphor of fire most often refers to: hell
 - b) Some people have been so influenced by the false teachers, that rather than being on the path to heaven, they are teetering on the edge of hell
 - (1) Jude does not give us enough information about these people

Contend for the Faith

- (2) With our understanding on the whole of Scripture, these people are not Christians yet, but have been won over by these false teachings
- c) As such, we are to reach out to them to snatch them from the fire
 - (1) They are poised on the edge of the abyss
 - d) Someone in this category may have fully embraced New Age ideas, or be thinking of converting to another religion, or is ready to turn away from biblical morals
- 4. The final group that we reach out to appears to be the false teachers themselves
 - a) We are to show mercy, mixed with fear - hating even the clothes stained by corrupted flesh
 - b) The mercy for them may be the form of prayers, but Jude is not specific
 - c) The mercy is mixed with fear
 - (1) Because of the ending words about hating even the clothes, the idea seems to be fearing the subtle influence of the false teachers
 - (2) Yes, show mercy to them, but be on guard in having contact with them as they too could be influenced
 - (3) The last phrase is actually graphic and gives us reason for this interpretation
 - (a) The word “stained” refers to human excrement
 - (b) The word for clothing is referring to the garment worn closest to the body
 - (c) So the picture Jude uses is graphic - that teaching and practice of the false teachers is stained underwear
 - (d) Remember a month or so ago I told you that the word for hating is an expressed hatred - something you run from - same here
 - (4) Let's face it, the NT tells us that we should take drastic measures against people that claim Christianity but are really wolves in sheep's clothing
 - (5) What caused this graphic depiction?
 - (a) Corrupted flesh
 - (b) The false teachers are following their own natural instincts and are without the Spirit
- E. An obvious practical question needs to be asked: How do you tell which category a person fits in?
 1. There is no easy answer
 2. Knowing the person well will be of great benefit
 3. But as for the strongest measures, two helpful hints

Contend for the Faith

- a) If you must remove someone from fellowship, the church or at least the whole church leadership should be involved
- b) Second, removing someone from church should be for serious violations when the person has been reached out to repeatedly and refuses to repent

V. These are some of the most important verses in the letter

A. Jude is spelling out how to contend for the faith

- 1. This has been the title of this series
- 2. And these are the verses we need to consider carefully because this is what Jude has been driving at the whole time
- 3. Jude is attempting to forewarn us so that we may be armed when we encounter similar scenarios
 - a) For the astute among us, you will notice I said “When we encounter”
 - b) It is not a question of if false teaching may creep into the church, it is a question of when
 - c) And again I go back to the fact that it is so very important to know our doctrine
 - (1) Honestly, we should, as a church, consider setting up some classes on doctrine
 - (2) A little theological school so to speak
 - d) Because we can expect false ideas to creep in the church, we should not be surprised that churches have people that “deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign Lord”
 - (1) They may be by their teaching
 - (2) Or by their lifestyle
 - (3) Most often it is both

B. Jude’s focus has been on a specific type of person - the scoffer

- 1. One that mocks God and His requirements for holy living
- 2. If you have not met someone in church like this, I promise you will eventually
 - a) When people in church consider long standing prohibitions against sins as passé, or old fashioned - that is a scoffer
 - b) They, by attitude, belief, or behavior are shaking their fist at God and saying “I know better”
 - c) Which, does this not bring to mind a famous story from Scripture?
 - (1) Adam and Eve in the garden with the serpent?
 - (2) “You will not surely die?” God is just trying to limit your freedom
 - (3) Adam and Eve fell for it, and we are paying the price ever since
- 3. This does differ from someone struggling with sin
 - a) Those people may be “living a lie” but it is not out of spite toward God

Contend for the Faith

- b) People that struggle with sin usually are living a lie and know it, and are afraid to be found out because they are ashamed of the fact that they are weak in whatever the area is
 - c) These are the ones that we should have mercy on, and help lead them back toward Christ because that is where they want to be, they simply struggle to stay there
 - d) The false teachers and scoffers that Jude describes live a lie not because of honest struggle, but because of living apart from the truth of God, and trying to convince others that God is accepting of their behavior
- C. Part of the problem is that we live in an age where truth is not very important
- 1. Which by the way is one of the cardinal hypocrisies of the secular world
 - a) Truth about life, and morals is not important, it is what feels good
 - b) But when we have to give an account - as in a court of law, when we want to go after someone we feel did us wrong, truth becomes a big deal
 - 2. Michael Green says it well, “We have largely lost any sense of the diabolical nature of false teaching, and have become as dulled to the distinction between truth and falsehood in ideas as we have to the distinction between right and wrong in behavior.¹”
 - 3. Contending for the faith is not just about fighting heretics, it is also about fighting our own weaknesses to maintain our faith
- D. Three main things really stand out in these verses for us today
- 1. Moving forward in the Christian life often means looking to the past
 - a) The growth Jude asks for is in the “faith once for all entrusted to the saints”
 - b) Many times this works its way out in what is new in the Christian life - the latest fad or issue
 - c) But in our desire to push forward, we need to remember to “watch our backs”
 - (1) We need that solid understanding of Christian doctrine
 - (2) A deep understanding that changes the heart and mind
 - 2. Jude uses the language of building - most likely drawn from the church as the new temple
 - a) If the church is the new temple, because God lives in us, and not in the temple any longer
 - b) And if we are to be building up,

¹ Douglas J. Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996) 295.

Contend for the Faith

- c) The implication is that we do this together as God's new temple
 - (1) We have talked about this a lot that the commands in the NT, many, if not most are meant for fulfillment in a group or community setting
 - (2) We, especially in the West, have made everything so individual
 - (3) We are to be building up the body of Christ (Eph. 4)
 - (a) That has a major implication for us
 - (b) We are all responsible for the building up of the Body - it is not just the Pastor's job, or the leadership of the church, but we are all responsible for it
 - d) All of this, of course, leads us back to some of the main ideas from the last series we did over summer - the idea of community, building each other up in discipleship
- 3. Jude also tells us to keep ourselves in God's love
 - a) If God's love is unconditional, why do we have to do anything to keep ourselves in God's love?
 - b) The long and short of it is, God, in his grace is exerting His power to keep us in His love
 - (1) The world throws everything it can at us to distract us from God and His amazing love
 - (2) God has given us everything we need to remain in His love - But we do take an active role in making use of what God gave us

CONCLUSION: Next week we will finish with the book of Jude. After that we will begin a study on grace. What it is. What it is not. What it looks like in our everyday lives.