

STUDIES IN JUDE – 3

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Scripture: Jude 1: 9-13

We're moving through this letter of Jude; one chapter with 25 verses, and we've made our way to v.7. But I'd like to highlight a couple of things that have been on my heart as we've gone through it. This morning as I was reading through it again, I kept coming back to these two words that are right there in the beginning – we are a called people, and we are a kept people. Not only called, but kept. I was thinking how often we need to know that He keeps us. When the winds of adversity come and when difficult situations threaten to overcome or encompass us, to know that He keeps us in the hollow of His hand. I like this whole idea of being a kept person by my God. He keeps me. It's a safe place. I just keep reading that over and over again, thanking Jude for putting it in there, because it reminds me that we have a benevolent Father who cares so very deeply for each one of us.

Then, He also adds this: may mercy, peace, and love be yours in great bounty, multiplied to you. What a lovely way to start a letter. We should write letters like that. may mercy, peace, and love be multiplied in your life. What a blessing! Because we can do with all the mercy that we need. So often we transgress God's holy laws and lead a life of immorality or non-ethical standards that we may keep, and then we come back to Him and His mercy envelops us. We know that the peace he's talking about is a peace that passes our understanding, a peace that doesn't just say two and two make four. A peace that comes to us in the midst of the storm and says, "I'm with you." And then love. Beautiful words as he starts this.

The whole epistle breaks itself up into four parts.

- Vs. 1-4 have to do with the purpose. Why is Jude writing this letter? What's so important that he would pen these 25 verses? Right at the outset he tells us: I was going to be writing actually a nice letter that talked about our salvation. It's almost like that's where I wanted to wax eloquent about God's salvation for me. And then I felt constrained not to write about that, but to write about false teaching that has crept into the church.
- Vs. 5-16 talks about these false teachers, their characteristics, their traits, and what has happened historically to people who have been like that.
- Vs. 17-23 talks about how we can counter this false teaching.
- Vs. 24-25 the beautiful doxology that he speaks over his congregation.

The main thrust is that there's false teaching that is permeating the church. And lest we think that this is only during the time of the first century, the time of Jude, we only need to look at Paul's writing to Timothy where he says, "Be careful. For there is a time that is coming where what is pure will get diluted. And what is incorruptible almost, will get corrupted.

In 2 Timothy 3, he puts it so vividly as he writes to his prodigy. He says, “But realize this, that in the last days, difficult times will come. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers or scoffers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied His power.” What a line! Holding to a form without the underlying meaning and power that comes with it. It’s like wearing a wedding ring without in any way recognizing the institution of marriage.

Then he says to Timothy in 4:2-5 in the midst of these trying circumstances, “Preach the Word whether you like it or not, whether you’re ready for it or not, whether you’re challenged or not. However, in these situations and circumstances, Timothy, preach the Word in season, out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort with great patience and instruction. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine. But wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths. But you be sober in all things. Endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist and fulfil your ministry.”

What is he saying? He’s saying there’s going to be a time when people will find teachers, false teachers obviously, who will not preach the gospel from the word of God, but will preach a gospel that aligns with the sinful lifestyle that people are living, and so authenticate it. Instead of aligning with the Word of God, they try and make the Word of God align with their lifestyles. What a travesty! And in the midst of this morass, he says “Preach the word.”

And Jude is saying the same thing. He says: “Why do people follow all these kinds of things? Why are they being tickled with people around who preach them? Because false teaching has crept into the church.” He uses the word ‘crept in’ which means they didn’t come with a bang and say “we have a new doctrine.” They came in undercover and then began to speak these words.

Jesus says in Matthew 7:15 that they will come like wolves in sheep clothing. But he also said, “Here’s the way that you can identify them. You can identify them by their fruit. So, Jude is saying, “Be very, very careful of this kind of teaching.

The first 4 verses as we looked at the purpose – two things must be predominant for us.

1. Are we fighting, are we contending for the truth, for the gospel? Are we standing up for what we believe? Are we able to recognize heresies? That is so important. We need to know scripture to be able to recognize a heresy. We cannot if we don’t know the Word of God.
2. What were they doubting at that time? That God is such a benevolent God. He wants to give grace freely to everybody. Then let’s make it easy for Him to give grace. We’ll just keep sinning. We sin and He gives grace. Everybody is happy. It’s a win-win situation. But it’s actually a lose-lose situation for them. There’s only one place they’re heading with that kind of thinking. Paul reminds us: God forbid. How can you even think like that, he says in Romans 6.

Then last week we looked at how Jude said that this kind of teaching has come in the past in history. And he showed us 3 examples.

1. The children of Israel. They came up to the land of Canaan but didn't go into the land of Canaan.
2. The fallen angels – he talked about boundaries that God had given to angels and how they broke through those boundaries, doing things they shouldn't have done.
3. The inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah – wanting to have perverted sex, homosexual sex with the angels.

And all of this because the children of Israel doubted the goodness of God, doubted all that God was doing for them, leading them. In spite of everything God had done, they were murmuring. And we asked ourselves: Are we murmurers? Have we forgotten the good things that God has done in our lives? as we look at problems or difficulties, are we forgetting that God has been a God who has consistently provided for us, taken care of us? Or is there pride? Is there anything in our lives that is wanting to usurp God's glory which rightfully should always be His? Then, is there any kind of unbridled lust or perversion in our lives that is coexisting with our walk of discipleship? Watch out so that this doesn't creep in.

Now, we come to vs 8-13.

⁸ Yet in the same way these men, also by dreaming, defile the flesh, and reject authority, and revile angelic majesties.

These false teachers are doing the same. They are falling into the same sin of defiling the flesh, rejecting authority, and reviling angelic majesties.

⁹ But Michael the archangel, when he disputed with the devil and argued about the body of Moses, did not dare pronounce against him a railing judgment, but simply said, "The Lord rebuke you!"

Jude is actually referring here to extra-biblical literature that was available during the 1st century. Our canon came to be only in the 3rd century, as we have the 66 books of the Bible. But there was extra-biblical literature that was available at that time. And he's talking about one of those passages where it is said that Satan was trying to get the body of Moses, claiming that Moses was a sinner because he had killed somebody when he was in Egypt. But Jude's point here is that even Michael, one of the top angels of God, didn't revile Satan. He spoke to him and said, "The Lord rebuke you."

That's a good word for us too, that when we come face to face with the demonic, we never stand in our own strength, or even think that we have the strength to stand against it. the only strength we have is an imputed strength of God to counter. In and or our human abilities, we don't have it. That's why we always say, "In the name of Jesus, I command you." It's in the name of Jesus that there is power.

¹⁰ But these men revile the things which they do not understand; In other words, they don't have any understanding of any of these things, but they scoff at it. They treat it with such disdain.

And the things which they know by instinct, like unreasoning animals, by these things they are destroyed. In other words, they act out just the things that come instinctively to them

without thinking about it. They don't apply their minds to what must be done in a situation, but they act with their instincts, just as animals act.

¹¹ Woe to them! For they have gone the way of Cain, and for pay they have rushed headlong into the error of Balaam, and perished in the rebellion of Korah.

He gives us three examples saying that this is going to be their end. This is the way that Cain, Balaam and Korah had acted, and that they are going to face that same end.

- What is he talking about Cain? Cain and Abel offered up offerings to God and God chose Abel's. Cain was so filled with envy and jealousy and anger. Instead of dealing with it righteously, he dealt with it in a vengeful way and killed his brother.
- What is he talking about Balaam? Remember Balaam the prophet? Balak was the king of Moab, and Balak asked him to come and curse the children of Israel. Balaam initially said no, and then he goes, and God allows it. But actually it was not the will of God for him to go, because God sent an angel with a sword. But Balaam was so caught up in the fact that there was remuneration that was going to be given to him, that he went. But even when he spoke, the only words that came from his mouth were words of blessing. He couldn't utter a curse against the children of Israel.
- What is he talking about Korah? "And perished in the rebellion of Korah." Remember Korah, and his two friends, along with about 250 Levites? They rebelled against Moses and Aaron and said, "You're not the only one that God speaks to. God speaks to us as well. And so we don't want you to be the sole person that God speaks through." And Moses then told them, "Let's meet tomorrow, and let God decide. Let's meet out in the open. God was so incensed with this, that the earth opened and swallowed up all the people who were with Korah, every single one of them."

And Jude is saying that's going to be the end for these people who dare to subvert the truth of the gospel, some way bringing in false teaching and diluting the word of God.

Then in vs. 12 and 13, it's like he looks for imagery that can help describe these people in a way that it would capture the imagination of the church, that they will be careful. They will look for these kinds of people within the imagery that he is offering.

¹² These are the men who are hidden reefs in your love feasts when they feast with you without fear, like shepherds caring only for themselves; clouds without water, carried along by winds; autumn trees without fruit, doubly dead, uprooted; ¹³ wild waves of the sea, churning up their own shameful deeds like dirty foam; wandering stars, for whom the gloom of darkness has been reserved forever.

What vivid imagery he has given us! I want us to look at each of them.

- Hidden reefs – posing a threat to spiritual well-being of believers. Reefs that you can't see. I remember many years ago, both Sheila and I were at a beach, and we had wandered far into the water, and hadn't realized that the tide had come in, it being low tide when we entered. We tried to make our way back, but the water had now covered the rocks that were there on the beach and we couldn't see them. We were stumbling and falling. Our knees were all scratched. Our feet were lacerated

completely when we finally made it out. Jude says that these are the things that are invisible, but they can do tremendous damage.

- Waterless clouds – clouds without rain provide no nourishment. And these are false teachers who offer empty promises and false teachings.
- Fruitless trees – they lack spiritual fruitfulness, representing their spiritual barrenness and inability to produce a genuine faith.
- Wild waves – they just bring up all the muck that is down; it all comes to the surface. That is how they are.
- Wandering stars – no direction, just wandering aimlessly in darkness.

These are the type of people that he says you need to be very, very careful about. Watch out for them because they can lead you astray. They creep in. Look at what is happening worldwide. You see such distortions of some of the doctrines. Something that God has given us as pure and good, in terms of our sexuality is getting perverted. We look at some of the prosperity gospels. You name it and claim it. All of them crept in. They came in slowly. It's like a frog that is put in water, which is then heated. By the time the frog realizes that it is going to be boiled, it is too late for it to jump out. That's what creeping in is all about. Wolves in sheep's clothing – not able to make them out. And the only thing Jesus said was, "By their fruit." Look for fruit. That'll be the primer that will let you know that it is authentic.

As I was going through this, I thought it is important for us, not only to know scripture, and we must spend time getting to know scripture, but also to have discernment. I want to pray as we close, that God would give us an extra measure of discernment for these days, that we will be able to see what is good and holy and pure against things that are defiled and evil.

Let us pray.
Amen.