

The Intention of Jude – Part 1

Introduction

a. objectives

1. subject – Jude greets his audience and indicates what his intention is in writing the letter
2. aim – to cause us to contend for the faith that was delivered to us by avoiding certain people
3. passage – Jude 1-4

b. outline

1. The Greeting of the Letter (Jude 1-2)
2. The Intention of the Letter (Jude 3)
3. The Warning of the Letter (Jude 4)

c. opening

1. **(again)** I apologize for the tendency to say “James” rather than “Jude” during this series!
 2. the **thesis** of the letter
 - a. as we “dive” into the text itself, we need to have a clear vision of the entire letter in doing so
 - b. it is *obvious* that Jude had a *clear reason* for writing this letter
 1. he had an *initial purpose*, but then *changed it* when he found it “*necessary*” (v. 3; **see below**)
 - c. **(again)** Jude’s statement in v. 4 is *clearly* his **thesis**: “*certain people have crept in unnoticed ...*”
 1. **i.e.** he is deeply concerned that false teachers have **infiltrated** the church and are espousing ideas that *undercut* (or deny) the gospel that the readers of the letter have heard and believed
 2. **i.e.** they are teaching things that “*pervert*” the grace of God into forms of “*sensuality*”
 3. **and**, their authority to do so is from their “*dreams*,” they “*reject [genuine] authority*” (v. 8)
 - d. **(again)** Jude is a **judgment oracle**, using **apocalyptic language** to warn the audience that these men are bringing the judgment of God from the “*creep*” of culture *back into the church* (where fear of judgment has been put away from believers by the finished work of Christ)
 1. **question: why must the church “contend” for the genuine gospel – the “faith that was once for all delivered to the saints?”**
 - a. **note:** Jude doesn’t *detail* what that gospel contains – **i.e.** this is not a *theological tome*
 - b. **i.e.** it is *apocalyptic* in that it addresses a *specific issue* in the church, but it doesn’t attempt to detail what the *original gospel* looks like
 - c. **although:** Jude does say that he *originally* intended to do just that (v. 3; **see below**)
 - d. **and:** Jude does give *hints* of what is *central* to that gospel (**see vv. 20-21**)
 2. **answer: because believers who fail to build up true faith in themselves (in its apostolic content) are subject to fall into the judgment pronounced upon the false teachers**
2. the **outline** of the letter (**four easy parts**)
 - a. **The Intention of Jude (1-4)** – the statement of his intention in writing the letter
 1. Jude begins with a greeting, and then makes it very clear why he has written – he is *deeply concerned* that the audience may not be taking the false teachers amongst them *seriously*
 - b. **The Judgment Oracle of Jude (5-16)** – the judgment oracle that applies to the false teachers
 2. Jude uses a number of *apocalyptic* events from the past to demonstrate that judgment is to come upon the false teachers, and (by extension) the danger to the audience
 - c. **The Exhortation of Jude (17-23)** – the exhortation to build themselves up in “*holy faith*”
 3. Jude reminds his audience of the prophetic nature of the apostles in delivering the true faith to them, and exhorts them to build up that faith in themselves *and in those who struggle*
 - d. **The Benediction of Jude (24-25)** – the positive, closing remark at the end
 4. Jude leaves them with a prayer that God would keep them from “*stumbling*” and would hold them fast so that he can present himself with a perfect prize won through the work of Christ
3. the **structure** of the letter
 - a. Jude does show signs of the **indicative/imperative** structure of many of Paul’s letters
 1. the indicatives = the *truth statements* upon which the core of the letter is structured (**i.e. vv. 1-16**; that false teachers *are real*; they come bringing their own judgment into the church)
 2. the imperatives = the *commands of faith* based on those indicatives (**i.e. vv. 17-25**; that the believers must be diligent to hold fast to the faith in the face of false teachings)

I. The Greeting of the Letter (Jude 1-2)

Content

a. the author of the letter (v. 1a)

1. the author identifies himself: “*Jude*” – the brother of James (sorry for referring to him last week as the *half-brother* of James), and (by extension) the half-brother of *Jesus* (or so the church has assumed)
 - a. and, I mistakenly called James the “elder brother” of Jude – that is unknown (although likely)
 - b. **i.e.** what if the appearance of Jesus to James was to the *eldest natural son of Joseph*?
2. Jude identifies himself as a “*servant*” of Jesus Christ (like James and Paul)
 - a. “*servant*” (*doulos*) = a slave; a bondservant; someone under the direct control and purpose of another; not a “chattel-slavery” bond, but a bond of *infinite love* of the master for the servant **that is expected to be requited by the servant to the master**
 - b. **again:** the idea of Christians being “slaves” to Jesus is one of the most *original* and *primitive* concepts of conversion in the early church – **i.e.** conversion by faith produces a change of *status* such that one is now “owned” by Christ Jesus, not just “connected” to him by “profession”
 1. this was a key theme in James, **and it is a key theme here, as well**
 2. **i.e.** those who belong to Jesus do so not by some “tenuous” connection to a simplistic Christology, but by a profound *and full* understanding of what that means (**see next**)

b. the audience of the letter (v. 1b)

1. Jude writes his letter “*to those who are called, beloved in God the Father and kept [by] Jesus Christ*”
 - a. **IMO:** one of the most “reformed” descriptions of a readership in the epistles
 1. similar in tone to **1 Peter 1:1** (“*to those who are elect exiles*”) – **IMO:** suggesting a “connection” between these two authors (**i.e.** as in the similar nature of **2 Peter 2** to **Jude 5-16**)
2. Jude holds a very **Trinitarian view** of the nature of his audience:
 - a. “*called*” = the work of the Spirit of God to *effectually* call a people out of the world to faith in Christ; a calling that is not just an “invitation,” but a call that *produces the effect it intends*
 1. **IOW:** Jude thinks of the Christians he is writing to as having been called out *specifically*, thus they are to “*contend*” for the faith that was “*delivered*” to them (**v. 3**)
 - b. “*beloved [agapaō] in God*” = an *active* love by God; a love *from the very nature of God*; a people “formed” from the very heart of the Father and his divine decree over them
 1. **IOW:** Jude thinks of the believers he is writing to as having a *unique* place in the heart and mind of God, thus their uniqueness means *contending to maintain that uniqueness*
 - c. “*kept for [by] Jesus Christ*” = a *preservation* either “*for*” Christ (**i.e.** as his “reward”) or (**better**) “*by*” Christ (**i.e.** under his power; **John 6:39f**)
 1. **IOW:** Jude thinks of individual followers of Jesus as people being *preserved* by him for his glorious ends (as the accomplishment of his ministry), thus they are to *persevere* in the faith
3. Jude sees his audience as a people set aside by the Father, called out by the Spirit, and held in faith by the Son – **false teachers deny this view of being a Christian in their utter self-centeredness**
 - a. **i.e.** Christianity is all about *you*, not about Christ – you are “special” simply because of your inherent nature; **e.g.** you *alone* can “speak” to issues because of your inherent “position” (**CRT**)
 - b. **Jude begins his letter telling his Christian friends they are decreed, called, and held fast by the Triune God, and then ends his letter praying for the Lord to complete that in them**

c. the greeting of the letter (v. 2)

1. **note:** James’ greeting is simple (“*greetings*”), but Jude uses a similar style to Paul’s epistles
2. the **supplicatory nature** of this salutation (**i.e.** “*may ... be multiplied to you [by God]*”)
 - a. **mercy** (*eleos*) = pity; compassion; **the single greatest need of the human race**
 1. the natural condition of the human race is to *already be* under the judgment of God (**Romans 1:18f**) – as natural rebels, human beings are *already* under God’s wrath (not his love!)
 - a. **e.g.** our culture is *under the judgment of God* because it refuses to acknowledge God
 2. but, in Christ, those who have been graciously called to faith *have received what they most need:* they are freed from the judgment and wrath of God to the hope of eternal salvation
 3. so, the “*mercy*” that Jude “prays” for here is **not** the mercy of salvation, but a full **appreciation** of what it means to have *already received* the mercy of God in Christ (to be “*multiplied*”)
 - a. **i.e.** mercy is a “backdrop” of the letter = Christians have been *freed* from judgment; the false teachers are “smuggling” that judgment back into the church in themselves

- b. peace (*eirēnē*, Heb. *shalom*) = harmony; tranquility; freedom from worry; genuine rest
 - 1. in the *modern* sense = a lack of hostility; a sense of calm (emotionally)
 - 2. in the *biblical* sense = a change of *relationship* that precludes any sense of continuing rebellion or hostility, *specifically* in the Creator-creature sense – a *new relationship* in propitiation
 - 3. so, the “*peace*” that Jude “prays” for here is *not* the peace of salvation, but a full **appreciation** of what it means to be at peace with God in Christ
 - a. **i.e.** peace is a “backdrop” of the letter = Christians are at peace with God in an intimate relationship with him as Father; the false teachers want to “break” that peace by returning believers into behaviors that make them rebels again
- c. love (*agapē*) = love; goodwill; an active caring for; a love of God that flows out of his nature
 - 1. **(see above)** having a unique place in the heart and mind of God – **i.e.** being
 - 2. so, the “*love*” that Jude “prays” for here is not the love of salvation, but a full **appreciation** of what it means to be loved by God, to be *uniquely* identified with him and *known by him*
 - a. **i.e.** love is a “backdrop” of the letter = Christians are truly *loved* by God; the false teachers are trying to “smuggle” back in a “worldly” form of love that is utter *self-focused* (**i.e.** as in self-esteem)
- d. **the reprobate (i.e. false teachers) do not truly know mercy, peace, or love – so Jude supplies the first sense of his intention in this “prayer” of greeting:**
 - 1. **that the audience would have multiplied to them a rich understanding of who they truly are in Christ – to realize that false teachers come only to “steal” that sense of mercy, peace and love from within them**
 - 2. **to encourage them as slaves to love (in Christ) rather than to fear (in judgment)**