

Contend Earnestly For the Faith Which Was Once For All Handed Down to the Saints

An Expository Study of the **Epistle of Jude**

Chapter 6- The History of Heresy **Jude 4**

45. The History of Heresy Part 15

WOSM Tuesday 01/08/08

Welcome again my brothers and sisters in Christ. We are continuing our verse by verse study of the Epistle of **Jude** and today I want to continue our examination of The History of Heresy by looking at the fourth verse of Jude- so let's read verse 4 together:

For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

We are continuing to study about who these “certain men” that Jude talks about here in verse 4 really were by studying the seven major groups of heresy. We are now concentrating on a late first century heresy that attacked the Church called Gnosticism.

Now we studied last time how that there are three main branches of Gnosticism:

1. Dualism
2. Syncretism
3. Docetism

Now on the last broadcast, we looked at Syncretism and today I want to see what the third branch of Gnosticism is, which is called, Docetism. Docetism is the branch of the Gnostic error that teaches that Jesus was not a real human being. The Docetists taught that all “spirit” is good and all “flesh” is bad, so the Docetists taught that Jesus only *appeared* to be human, but was, in fact, nothing more than a “spirit being” who just *seemed* to have a human body.

Once again, many who serve the Lord today may not look at this as such a big deal, but it really is. Here's why. If Jesus was not human, then He could not have been born of a virgin, and therefore, He was not Immanuel. If Jesus was not a real person, then He could not have been the seed of King David, which would mean that He didn't fulfil the hundreds of Old Testament prophecies and that would mean that He really wasn't really the Messiah after all.

If the Docetists were right and Jesus was not a real person, then He could not have taken upon Himself the sins of us all- so therefore- we are yet in our sins. If Jesus was not a real Person, then He could not have been tempted like we are in every point, yet without sin, and therefore, Jesus would have been no more righteous than we are. And if Jesus was no more righteous than we are, we have no way to become righteous in the Eyes of God and therefore we cannot stand before God in Heaven.

The Apostle John saw the seriousness of this error, and he wrote his Epistle to deal specifically with the error of the Docetists, who taught that Jesus was not human. Let's look at what John wrote in **1John 4:1:**

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

John taught the people here that they were not to be naive as it pertained to false prophets and those who would bring in heresy to the Church. He said that we are not to believe every spirit. We are not to listen to every person who speaks in the Name of the Lord. We are not to believe everyone who says that they have heard from God or who says that they have a word from God. John was not telling us to become cynical or suspicious, but John was telling us that we are to put what people say and what people write and what people teach to a spiritual test. Let's see what that test is in verse 2:

By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God;

The Docetists had come into the Church and were teaching that Jesus was a spiritual concept and was not human. They were teaching that Christ didn't have a fleshly Body and that He had not

really come in to the world as a real human being. And the Apostle John was not content with simply letting them teach their false doctrine. John was not content with trying to show them love by letting them come into the Church and deceive people. John was willing to break unity and fellowship with these people over this important issue of Doctrine. John says that these people were heretical and were not teaching the Truth.

John wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit that the only true Christians are those who believe and confess that Jesus has come in the flesh and who believe and confess that Jesus was a real human being who breathed air and who hungered and who had red blood in His Veins and Who lived and died and rose again. And by saying this, John was drawing everyone's attention to how important it was the Jesus was both God and Man. But John didn't stop here. He went on to say more about these Gnostic heretics. Let's read verse 3:

and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the *spirit* of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.

John makes some very powerful statements here about the Gnostic heretics of his day. John says that they are not of God and they are antichrist. According to the Evangelical Dictionary of Theology, anyone who fights against Christ – especially by teaching false things about Jesus personally or the Gospel- is an antichrist.

Now if John was alive today, the local ministerial association would go to him and try to get him to tone down his rhetoric. They would tell him that it really wasn't as bad as he said that it was. They would remind John of how sincere the Gnostics were. They would list for John all of the noble and good deeds that the Gnostics were doing in the community and of how many widows and poor people the Gnostic had helped. The local pastors would gather around John and pray that he would be more tolerant of those who disagree with him; that John could somehow be more loving and more Christian in his attacks against the Gnostics.

They would try to get John to be less concerned about Doctrine- after all- nobody wants or needs Doctrine anymore today- its too stiff and dry and academic and after all Bible Study is boring. It would be so much better if John would do less teaching and less preaching and

less praying and less doctrinal instruction and have something more exciting in the Church like more singing. Maybe John could start a nice yoga class- I hear that that kind of service is well attended over in Smyrna; or perhaps we could form a gardening club or do pottery. The concerned pastors of Ephesus would try to get John to see that much learning had made him mad and that he needed to calm down and let his hair down and start being like the Church over in Corinth who had long ago abandoned the systematic study of the Word of God for more interesting and important things like puppet shows or a comedian to tell us a few jokes.

Obviously, John's association with men like Paul and Peter and Jude had really warped his sense of humor- because John didn't think that what the Gnostics was teaching was funny. He didn't think it was cute or sweet or innocent did he? No, the Holy Spirit had moved upon John to say that anyone who was teaching false things about Jesus was not of God and was fighting against the cause of Christ and was, in fact, antichrist.

Well, what do you know? So we can see that the error of the Gnostics was a big deal to John wasn't it? And we can see that none of the men that God used to raise up the Church thought that an attack against the Gospel or against the Person of Jesus Christ was an innocent misunderstanding can't we? No, heresy and false teaching and misrepresenting Who Christ is and what Christ did and saying, "Thus says the Lord" when the Lord has not spoken and making up doctrine because it suites someone's fancy and twisting verse of Scripture was all viewed by the early Church as a serious and a real threat and every single man that wrote in the Bible said it was wrong and that it mattered and that it was a big deal.

And it is still a big deal today. If you were to analyze all of the attacks today against Christianity, almost every one of the attacks against the Christian Faith center around two areas:

- ✓ Just Who Jesus is
- ✓ How a lost man is saved

These are the two areas that the devil attacked in the first century with the Antinomians and the Judaizers and the Gnostics; these are the two areas that the devil attacked in the fourth and ninth

and sixteenth centuries with the Modalists, the Arians, the Pelagians, and the Socinians; and these are the areas that the devil attacks today. These two areas- the Person of Jesus- just who Jesus is, and how a man is saved are the very areas that Jude said in verse 4 that these “certain men”, who crept into the Church unaware, would fight over.

You know, it really is amazing to see how many people today are so laid back and unconcerned about all of this. For a man to cry out against the heresy and the apostasy of false doctrine today is like plowing through rocks in the field. You are labeled as unloving; unchristian; mean spirited; hard; cruel; fat and ugly. It is much easier to simply not bring this stuff up. But Paul and John and Peter and Jude did what they did because of three irrefutable facts. These men of God were willing to buck the consensus of their day; they were willing to go against the tide of compromise and the attitude of going along to get along; they were willing to day in and day out faithfully cry out against ungodly men creeping into the Church turning the Grace of God into something evil because they had literally seen Jesus Christ; and they had been changed by His Power; and they loved the people of God enough to tell them the Truth.

Each one of these men had looked into the Face of the Son of God. They had stared into His Eyes. They had been personally commissioned to go and tell. They had been handed the most precious commodity in all the universe- the Gospel of God – and they were told to love it; to learn it; to proclaim it; to teach it; to defend it; and to pass it on.

But now this glorious Gospel is in our hands. It lays at our feet. And we are responsible for what we do with it. The Gospel will either be contended for; and upheld and loved and proclaimed; and defended for like Jude urged us to do- or else it will fall down and be trampled under the feet of man.

Just like it did in Paul’s day, heresy is knocking at our door. Just like they did in John’s day, men are creeping into the Church and teaching damnable lies about Jesus and about God and about Salvation and they are corrupting the Truth in the eyes and ears of the people of God. Just like in Jude’s day if we do not earnestly contend for the faith that was once and for all delivered to the saints, we will no longer have a common salvation.

Are things really that bad? Well let's see. We have some Churches teaching that Salvation comes to Man by Grace through Faith in Christ alone, while others teach that Salvation comes by Grace through Faith in Christ plus human effort; while still others teach that everybody is already saved. Well, which one is it?

Are the ancient heresies that the Church fought against thousands of years ago making a comeback today? Well, let's see. According to Ministries Today magazine, forty percent of all pastors who stand in the pulpit today do not believe that Jesus was born of a virgin or that He lived a sinless life. And the real shame is that a growing percentage of Church members today don't even know why the Virgin Birth and the Sinless Life of Christ are even important.

Didn't these ancient heresies die out long ago? Well, let's see. According to their own Web page, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints teaches that God was once a man and that we all can one day become gods and these people have enjoyed double digit conversion rates every year for over twenty consecutive years preaching this heresy. Every weekend an army of 187,000 Jehovah's Witnesses goes door to door throughout America teaching people that Jesus was not Deity and that there is no hell- and they are growing faster than the Southern Baptists and the Pentecostal Churches in America combined.

Is heresy on the march again in our land? Is apostasy creeping back into our Church? You be the judge. Is what I am saying just the crazy rantings of a poe dunk preacher in South Mississippi, or is what I am saying exactly what the Bible says will happen in the last days? Only time will tell.

Are we or are we not living in a time when people will not endure Sound Doctrine? Are we or are we not living in the day of the great falling away? Are we or are we not living in a day when men call good evil and evil good? If we aren't, then don't worry about it- all is well. But if we are- then you and I need to admit that we have drifted far away from what God's Word says that we should be and that we should be doing and we need to repent and return to Biblical Christianity and we need to repent and return to our first love and we need to repent and once again grab the horns of the altar and once again weep between the porch and the altar and we need to repent and return to when the Church had a high view of God and a high

view of Scripture and when the Church was the Light of the world and the City set on a hill and when the Church was the pillar and the ground of the Truth and we need to return to the Faith that was once and for all delivered to the saints.

Well, I'm out of time for today- but please join me on the next broadcast as we continue our Journey through the Epistle of **Jude**. May God help us all.

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