

# 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**

#### 53. The History of Heresy Part 23

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WOSM Friday 01/18/08

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.**

Now we are continuing to study about who these "certain persons" that Jude talks about here in verse 4 really were by studying the seven major groups of heresy. Now we have already covered the Antinomians, the Judaizers, the Gnostics, and the Modalists. Now we are continuing in our study of one of the most important times of the Christian Church- a time when the Church nearly lost its understanding of the Deity of Jesus Christ and when heresy nearly destroyed the Gospel. This is what the heresy of Arianism was all about.

We are now at the time when the Emperor of Rome, Constantine did something unprecedented. The secular ruler of a government called the church together to settle a theological dispute. Again, there were various reasons for this unprecedented action, but the main reason was that Constantine didn't want the Christian Church to be torn apart over Doctrine.

So, Constantine called the Church to gather in the city of Nicaea- which was near to Constantinople. According to Eusebius, the historian, the Council convened on June 19, 325. 300 bishops from around the world were in attendance. This was the first truly ecumenical council, meaning world wide because- stop and think about

it- this was the first time that all the bishops from around the world could gather together without the fear of persecution.

Eusebius, the historian, who was physically present at the Council recorded Constantine's exact words. Among those words were these:

“Discord in the Church I find far more fearful and more painful than any other war”. He said, “When I heard of your division, I was convinced that this matter should by no means be neglected, and in the desire to assist by my service, I have summoned you without delay. I shall, however feel my desire fulfilled only when I see the minds of all united in that peaceful harmony which you, the anointed of God must preach to others. Delay not therefore, my dear friends, delay not, servants of God. Put away all causes of strife and loose all knots of discord by the laws of peace.”

Now we can sympathize with Constantine here. He was personally grieved that the Church was being divided over Doctrine. Constantine wanted the Church to settle the Arian Controversy one way or the other. The Roman Emperor wanted peace. The 300 bishops of the Church wanted peace. And I understand that. It should always be the desire for all who know and love the Lord to desire peace. Jesus, the Lord of the Church had taught in **Matthew 5:9**:

**Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.**

And again the Apostle Paul has taught in **Romans 12:18**:

**If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.**

Beloved, anyone who loves the Lord hates division. Only a fool desires to do battle and wage war against anyone. War should be the last thing on anyone's list- especially a Christian. I personally cannot stand conflict. I would rather run from it than stand and fight. Christianity itself is a religion that is bathed in love and we are to live peaceably with all men- on two conditions:

1. If possible
2. With all the power that lies within us

Yet in spite of these Biblical commands, wars come don't they? And terrible and awful wars come precisely because when we are attacked, we only have two choices- we must fight to defend ourselves, or else we must surrender to the attacking nation.

Because you see, there are two ways to achieve peace- fight until the opposing army surrenders, or give up and allow the opposing army to win. Both of these methods achieves peace- but only one of these methods is good.

The nations of Eastern Europe enjoyed uninterrupted peace from 1945 until 1993 precisely because they were made slaves to Communist Russia. They had peace, but it was a slave's peace. Had they fought against enslavement by Russia, the countries of Eastern Europe may have temporarily lost the peace that came from subjugation, but had those nations been successful in defeating Soviet Russia, they would have gained the peace that comes from freedom which is a greater and a better peace.

To live with the peace of slavery- nothing is required. You simply give in to those who seek to dominate you and as long as you serve them without resistance- you can have peace- the peace of a slave.

But if you seek the peace that comes from freedom- you have to be willing to fight and you have to be willing to die and you have to be willing to do whatever it takes- for as long as it takes to achieve victory.

The Bible does not teach us to live peaceably with all men- period. It tells us to live peaceably with all men as much as it lies within us and if it is possible. But sometimes it isn't possible and when that moment comes and when we have exhausted our efforts and we have utilized all the power than lies within us and after we have exhausted all possibly ways to arrive at peace and have failed- it then falls upon us to either value what we are doing enough to fight for it or give in to those who seek to take over.

This was the state of the Church in the fourth century. Arius would not stop attacking the Divinity of Christ. And more and more people were becoming convinced that what Arius was teaching might well be true. So the Church either had to officially denounce what he was teaching as a heresy and formally run Arius and his followers off- or else the Church had to back off Scripture and allow Arius to teach his false doctrine. Either way would have achieved tranquility and

peace within the Church and heal the division, but only one way would be faithful to God.

People of God may disagree about many, many things and still be Christians and still be brothers and sisters in Christ. We are commanded to forgive each other and to be merciful to each other and to work with each other so that Christian unity can be preserved.

But no where in Scripture are we ever told to accept wrong and false and unbiblical teachings that will alter how we view Christ or how a man is saved or things that pertain to eternity from any man in the name of preserving Christian unity. We *are* told however to hold everything that a man writes or teaches or proclaims against the Holy Scriptures to see if it is true. And if it is Biblical, we must commend it but if it is unscriptural, we not only have the right- we have the responsibility to reject it and to cry out against it.

Many people today either don't understand this or don't want to. As I have told you many times before- I do not have the right or the authority or the ability to judge another man's heart. I cannot read another man's mind and I can't even judge his motives. And that is why I am not doing that now and God willing, I never will.

But if we believe that no one can be saved unless they hear the Gospel preached rightly and fully and fearlessly- then the integrity of the Word that is preached becomes all important. And any attempt by anyone for any reason to monkey around with the everlasting Gospel of God is something that we cannot and we must not tolerate. When someone's doctrine is so seriously flawed that it corrupts the Biblical understanding of Christ's Deity- then souls are in peril and the leaders of the Church have the responsibility to protect the sheep from these heretics.

So not only do we have the right to denounce false Doctrine- we are abdicating our responsibility as watchmen upon the walls if we do *not* cry out against it. So when you come across with something this serious- peace and tranquility and unity is no longer the primary Goal- the primary goal becomes the casting down of the false doctrine and the rescuing of God's people from lies that could place them in eternal jeopardy.

But because many today have a warped sense of what true peace really is and because many today have an unbiblical understanding of what genuine Christian unity really is- those brave few souls who

faithfully warn Gods' people about the wolf trying to sneak into the chicken coop are viewed as being condemning and unloving- which is simply not true.

For the Church leaders to acquiesce to the heresy of Arianism in the fourth century would have meant that the Church was no longer going to formulate Christian Doctrine based upon the Scriptures. It would have meant that eventually, the Church was going to have to take out of the Bible those Scriptures that affirmed Christ's Deity. It would have also meant that the Church would not be able to allow anyone to ever worship Jesus Christ again- because if Jesus was not God- we shouldn't worship Him.

Of course, this is precisely what the Jehovah's Witnesses did in the late 1800's. A Baptist preacher by the name of Charles Taze Russell resurrected the fourth century heresy of the Arians; read it and believed it and began to teach it; And the result is that the Jehovah's Witnesses changed the Bible and took out of the Bible those passages that affirm Christ's Deity; and today, the foundational Doctrine of the Jehovah's Witnesses is the very same false teaching of Arius from the fourth century that denies the Deity of Jesus Christ.

I have in my office a copy of the Bible that the Jehovah's Witnesses use today. It is called The New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures and I want to read to you the very same verse that we have studied before, **John 1:1** to show you what these modern day Arians did to the Bible. In the real Bible, **John 1:1** says:

**In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.**

But in the Jehovah's Witness Bible, this same verse reads:

“In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was a god.”

They changed two things in this one verse. The Jehovah's Witnesses added the letter “a” to the verse to say that Jesus was a god instead of that Jesus was God and they didn't capitalize the word god to show that Jesus was a created being- who as more than a man, but less

that Almighty God- the very same thing that Arius taught in the fourth century.

When you consider that the Jehovah's Witnesses take their army of volunteers to the streets every single Saturday to go door to door trying to win thousands of converts to Arianism every week, you can see that although Arianism is a fourth century heresy- it is alive and well and living with us today.

I guess those who don't think that it is unloving or unchristian to teach against false doctrine don't have any problem with people being converted to Arianism today and rejecting the Deity of Christ, but I do have a problem with that, which is why I am doing what I am doing.

I have been asked many times why I am spending so much time with this. Besides the historical value of our past- why do I spend so much time talking about all these details. Here's why. Because Arius changed one letter of one word, the Church of the fourth century was nearly destroyed. Because one letter of one word of Doctrine was altered, a Church Council had to be convened. Because one letter of one word was added to what the Bible taught about Christ's Deity, a Baptist pastor in the 19<sup>th</sup> century resurrected the heresy of Arianism. Because one letter of one word was added to Scriptural Truth, according to the official web site of the Jehovah's Witnesses, as of 2005, 6.6 million people are following the teachings of Arius today. Because the majority of the Bishops of the fourth century didn't think that this was a big deal, today we have 6.6 million people who have rejected the Deity of Jesus Christ and who believe that Christ was a created being and not God in the flesh.

And precisely because the Church did not earnestly contend for the Faith that was once and for all delivered to the saints in the fourth century, 6.6 million people believe in the false teaching of Arius today. This is why I do this. 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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