

The Book of Jude - The Danger of Backsliding

PURPOSE: The burden of Jude was to warn the saints against the mixture that was coming into the Church, and to encourage them to guard themselves & go on to perfection.

PLACEMENT: The book of Jude was placed near the very end of the Bible, just before the book of Revelation. This was guided by the Holy Spirit to signify its importance at the end of the Church age, when deception and backsliding will intensify, Mt.24:3-5 & 11, II Thess.2:1-12.

AUTHOR: Verse 1 tells us that the author is Jude (or Judas), the brother of James.

- * He was not the Apostle Judas, who was the son of James, Luke 6:16.
- * He was one of the younger half-brothers of Jesus Christ, Mt.13:55 & Mk.6:3.
- * Jude and his brother James both were strongly influenced by their older half-brother, Jesus of Nazareth. We can see this in the strong emphasis on righteousness in both of the epistles that they wrote.
- * Jude probably became a traveling preacher and missionary, who traveled with his wife, I Cor.9:5.
- * Jude's name in Greek is Judas, the same as Judas Iscariot. The Holy Spirit chose the Epistle of Judas to warn us of the danger of backsliding!
- * Jude 4-18 is very similar to II Peter 2:1-3:4, and Jude 18 is a direct quote from II Pet.3:3. This suggests that Jude was familiar with the letter of II Peter, or at least knew Peters' teachings very well. But the Holy Spirit constrained Jude to repeat and reinforce these warnings in his small but powerful letter, vs.17-18. So we have the short but sharp warning of Judas!

OUTLINE:

- A. Verses 1-2 Greeting
- B. Verses 3-4 Jude's Warning: Apostasy in the Church!
- C. Verses 5-19 Warnings from History & The Results of Backsliding
- D. Verses 20-23 The Way of the Just
- E. Verses 24-25 Benediction

A. Verses 1-2 Greeting

- v.1 Jude identifies himself, not as the brother of Jesus Christ, but as the brother of James. Both Jude & James never personally identified themselves as the brothers of Jesus, in humility perhaps first born out of their having not believed in Jesus, Jn.7:5, and in not wanting to exalt a fleshly relationship, Lk.8:19-21.
- v.1 & 2 Jude uses three triplets in these opening verses (Jude, Jesus Christ, James), (called, sanctified, preserved), & (mercy, peace, love). The entire epistle is full of triplets, as Jude sought to frame his thoughts in divine patterns and expound God's wisdom in simple to understand logic.

B. Verses 3-4 Warning: Apostasy in the Church! Jude wanted to write about our salvation, but felt led to instead write a warning. Jude had seen the mixture entering the Church, especially so because he was a traveling preacher who saw the problems firsthand. This mixture had been prophesied by Christ (as in Matthew 13:24-30 & 36-43) and warned of by the Apostles (vs.17-18).

C. Verses 5-19 Warnings from History & The Results of Backsliding

- v.5 Warning: Many Israelites who were saved out of Egypt later backslid.
- v.6 Warning: The angels who backslid from heaven.
- v.7 Warning: The backsliders of Sodom, & their judgment.
- v.8 The Results of Backsliding: dreaming (or vain, proud imaginations) leads to:
 - a) Defiling the flesh (like Sodom and Gomorrah, who began to backslide through pride, Ezek.16:49)
 - b) Rejecting authority (like the Israelites, Ex.32:1 & Num.14:1-4; and Lucifer, Ez.28:17, Is.14:12-14). We are to honor authority, I Pet.2:17, I Sam.26:7-9.

- c) Reviling angelic majesties (which the Sodomites did, Gen.19:5) but Michael did not do, verse 9.
- v.9 Warning: Michael's Godly Example- This is a true revelation, quoted from the non-canonical book of the Assumption of Moses. The example of the Archangel Michael warns us not to revile, rail, or bring our own judgment against the fallen angels that still have more natural power than us, Ps.8:4-5. When we move in the Spirit, we have God's greater authority I Cor.6:3, but if we move in the flesh to come against the fallen angels, there will be two results:
- a) The fallen angels will use their greater natural power to attack us in our weak areas and try to lead us into backsliding.
 - b) By our not properly respecting God- given authority (even to the fallen angels, as Michael is our example here) we can begin to lift ourselves up in pride, and have our character corrupted like how Lucifer fell.
- v.10 The Results of Backsliding: reviling (Greek, "blasphemeo"), even such as the angels that fell; and natural fleshly corruptions.
- v.11 Warning: The 3 Steps to Destruction- THE COUNTERFEIT WAY, TRUTH, & THE LIFE
- * Jesus said He is the way, truth, and the life- but Jude 11 is a counterfeit and substitute to this!
- a) THE WAY OF CAIN** (study Gen.4:1-16)
- 1) Cain was a believer- a. He worshipped God, v.3 b. He talked with God, v.6- 15 c. He knew God's face, v.14 d. He had dwelt in God's presence, v.16.
 - 2) Cain offered a wrong, natural sacrifice- v.3 of the fruit of the ground- but the ground was cursed! (Gen.3:17). Cain tried to serve God his own way- not God's way, Is.58:8-9, Prov.14:12. Abel worshipped God's way with a meek lamb. This is what we need, Mt. 11:28, Ps.25:9.
 - 3) Cain and his offering were not accepted by God, v.5. If we do not serve the Lord the right way, our service or offerings will not be blessed- our ministry will not be accepted! (by God & the church)
 - 4) Cain became angry & sad, and rejected God's correction (v.5-7). Are we meek- or do we become angry or sad- when we are corrected?
 - 5) Cain killed his brother because of anger (v.8) and jealousy, I Jn.3:12. People in the church can grow jealous or bitter or angry of others- but it is evidence that they are going in the way of Cain, I Jn.3:11-15.
 - 6) Cain left the presence of God to become a wanderer (v.16). Nod= "wandering" People who go their own way & allow wrong attitudes to grow in their hearts will leave the presence of God- to wander!
- b) THE ERROR OF BALAAM** (Numbers 22-25). What was Balaam's error? He deceived himself. He thought he was obeying God when he was disobeying God! Balaam was following his greed, not the will of God!
- 1) Num.22:9-14 God told Balaam not to go.
 - 2) Num.22:15-22 Balaam asked again, God let him go but was angry with him. God may permit us to disobey Him if we keep asking for permission!
 - 3) Num.22:23-29 The donkey kept disobeying Balaam so he wanted to kill him.
 - 4) Num.22:31-33 Balaam kept disobeying God, so God wanted to kill Balaam!
 - 5) Num.22:34 Balaam did not truly repent- "if you want I will turn back".
 - 6) Num.22:35 God permitted Balaam to go- Ps.125:5- God spoke to him and lead him according to the sin of his heart. Sin leads to deception- II Thess.2:11-12.
 - 7) Balaam prophesied, and acted very spiritual (Num.22:8,18-19,38) -but he was killed by the sword of God's judgment, Num.31:7-8. -We can go our own selfish way (like Cain) & become deceived (like Balaam), thinking we are doing what is right!
- c) THE DEATH OF KORAH** (Numbers 16). Korah and the others died because they rebelled against Moses & Aaron.
- 1) Num.16:1-3 Korah & 250 leaders rebel: equality & democracy!
 - 2) Num.16:19 Korah got the assembly- the church- to oppose Moses & Aaron. Those opposing God's leaders try to get the people to support their side.
 - 3) Num.16:28-32 they died in the rebellion of Korah. Rebellion, church splits, & criticizing God's leaders will always bring God's judgment, either to spiritual or natural death. We will reap what we sow, Gal.6:7-8

v.12-13 The Results of Backsliding- These people are like:

- a) Hidden reefs (spots, KJV)- that can cause people to make shipwreck of their faith, I Tim.1:19.
Backsliding church members can be dangerous to the other members, even during the "love feasts" (or communion services). We must avoid these people as dangerous, not seek to have a false fellowship with them, I Jn.1:7.
 - b) Selfish shepherds (KJV "feeding themselves"; NIV "shepherds who feed only themselves"). See Ezek.34:1-16.
 - c) Clouds without water (Prov.25:14). A true gift or ministry gets results, Dt.32:1-2.
 - d) Carried by winds (Eph.4:14) winds of unbalanced doctrine that "blow through" the Church- not from the wind of the Holy Spirit, but from the Prince of the Power of The Air, Eph.2:2. These backsliders sometimes become "church hoppers".
 - e) Autumn trees without fruit (Ps.1:1-4) & uprooted, Mat.3:10, 7:19.
 - f) Raging waves (Is.57:20-21) troubled & restless, (Jam.1:6-8) double-minded, doubtful, and unbelieving.
 - g) Wandering stars (comets)- unstable, not in balanced relationship with others. They give light for a short season, but return to darkness. This is not like the righteous, Dan.12:3. The backsliders wander like Cain, Gen.4:14.
- v.14-15 Warning: Enoch's Prophecy of Judgment- This is quoted from the non-canonical Book of Enoch. The judgment against the ungodly is applied by Jude to refer to the backsliders who are still in the Church!
- v.16 The Results of Backsliding- evil words (murmurers, faultfinders, flatterers) and evil works (walking after the flesh). An example is Zedekiah in I Kgs.22:10-25. He flattered the king to gain advantage, but he rebuked the true prophet to try to cover his own spiritual shame. What he could not perceive was the lying spirit that he was controlled by!
- v.17-18 The Apostles' Prophecies of Judgment- such as II Pet.3:2-3 (which is quoted here) & II Tim.3:1-5.
- v.19 The Results- backsliding believers who are sensual, natural, soulish or worldly (as opposed to spiritual) can cause division (like Korah), I Cor.11:18-19, I Jn.2:19.

D. Verses 20-23 The Way of the Just

- a) Vs.20-21, Building godly lives: We must do more than "contend" (as in v.3) or defend ourselves, we must also build ourselves up. Nehemiah's men used both their swords (for defence) and their trowels (to build).
 - v.20 Praying in the Spirit builds us up, I Cor.14:4.
 - v.21 "Keep yourselves"- while it is God who keeps us (v.1) we also have a responsibility to not frustrate the grace of God, Gal.2:21, Jn.15:10. The angels in v.6 did not keep themselves.
 - v.21 "Looking for (or, waiting for) the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life"- this speaks of His second coming, Titus 2:13, Lk.12:36.
- b) Vs.22-23, Exercising godly ministry: We must major on building godly lives as a sure foundation towards entering into a godly ministry, Prov.16:32. This was God's pattern from the beginning, Gen.1:26. The Prodigal son had this important priority backward, and he backslid, Lk.15:12 & 19
 - v.22 have mercy on the doubting- build them up, Is.42:3, Jn.20:24-29.
 - v.23 save others from the fire- we are to exercise mercy and bring deliverance (Zech.3:1-3), even though some will not continue to walk in it, Amos 4:11.
 - v.23 have mercy with fear on the unclean (fearing God, lest you become like them). The fear of God will cause us to hate & flee from evil, Prov.8:13; 16:6.

E. Verses 24-25 Benediction

- v.24 God can keep us from falling (Jude v.1) and prepare us for the day when we will be presented faultless before the Throne of Grace, Heb.4:16. Esther approached the king on his throne, with the fear that she might perish, Est.4:11. But when she came dressed in her royal robes, the king saw her faultless as his very queen, Est.5:2. As we follow the Lord wholeheartedly, He will clothe us and cause us to approach Him as His spotless, holy bride, Eph.5:27.
- v.25 According to & to the praise of His eternal dominion & power, our Lord is able to perfect us, Phil.1:6.