

**Covenant History Series**  
***Jude—On Contending for the Faith***

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Sunday, January 3, 2010

*Introduction*

- I. The author calls himself **Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James** (v. 1)
  - A. The James he refers to is not the James of the James and John, sons of Zebedee, one of the original twelve apostles, of whom we read in so many places in the Gospels
  - B. Rather, he is the James who wrote the epistle of James, who (as we have seen) was none other than the brother of our Lord Jesus Christ
    1. This means, obviously, that if James is the brother of our Lord, and Jude is the brother of James, then Jude also is the brother of our Lord
    2. We see the relationship of these two men to Jesus in **Matthew 13:53-55** (cf. Mk. 6:1-3)
      - a. The name Judas in Matthew 13:55 and the name Jude in Jude 1:1 are the same in the original Greek (Ιούδας). Why it is translated Judas in Matthew, and Jude in Jude...I have no idea
      - b. It may be that Matthew lists the brothers of Jesus according to the order of their birth, so that James was the eldest of our Lord's brothers, and Jude the youngest

3. The brothers of our Lord Jesus Christ had a prominent role in the early church (**1 Cor. 9:1-5**)
  - a. During his earthly ministry, they did not believe him, as we see from **John 7:2-5**
  - b. But they came to believe after his resurrection (see **1 Cor. 15:3-7**)
- C. Jude calls himself the “brother of James”, but not “the brother of the Lord”. James also, in his letter, fails to mention that he is the Lord’s brother. Why?
  1. No doubt it was out of a sincere and *deeply felt* humility
  2. Jude is content to refer to himself simply as “the *servant* of Jesus Christ”, which is how Paul often refers to himself (Rom. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; cf. Gal. 1:10; Col. 4:7), also Peter (2 Pet. 1:1) and James (Jas. 1:1)
- II. The epistle of Jude is grouped with the catholic or general epistles because he doesn’t indicate a specific individual or church in his address. He says simply, **To those who are called, beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ** (v. 2). The letter was probably not intended for a single church, but a group of churches, among whom he ministered.
- III. It should be noted that there are many similarities between Second Peter and Jude, and it appears that at certain points one is using the other as a source, or both are using a third document which has been lost to us. Scholars debate the relationship between the two letters, but we need not concern ourselves with the question

- IV. Jude says that he had intended to write on another subject, but found it necessary to write in order to urge his readers to “contend for the faith”. **Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints** (v. 3).
- A. It would be interesting to learn what he would have written about our common salvation, had he not found it necessary to change his subject
- B. With regard to his subject of contending for the faith, it is interesting to see what matters he deemed to be of vital concern. The chief matter is mentioned in verse four, and the rest of the letter is simply an expansion on this theme: **Certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who *pervert the grace of our God into sensuality* and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ** (v. 4).
1. This is an error that the people of God have had to deal with from the beginning of time, a gross misunderstanding of the grace of God
  2. Many people are very presumptuous. They *presume* upon the grace of God. They are very reluctant to believe that he will hold anyone accountable for sin. If there is anything that is taken to be axiomatic it is that the worst of all sins is to judge someone to be a sinner. Not even God is allowed to do this! Why, he wouldn't be God if he failed to overlook our misdeeds, which are more like mistakes than sins, because his commandments are more like guidelines than law. Surely God wouldn't be so petty, so unforgiving, so rigid and unyielding as actually to punish someone for his wrongdoing? How un-god-like, people say.

3. Honestly, this is how many people think. God is so gracious, so kind, so forgiving, it doesn't really matter what we do, God will forgive. After all, he's God, and that's what God does...he forgive sins. That's his job description. They presume upon God's kindness. Or as Jude says, they "pervert the grace of our God into sensuality." They use his grace as an excuse to live ungodly lives, which is manifested oftentimes in sensuality, or sexual license.
  - a. **Rom. 2:4-5; 6:1-2**
  
4. This has even been formalized in certain systems of theology, those that pit the law and the gospel against each other.
  - a. There are some who teach that the Bible must be read in terms of a law/gospel dichotomy. Verses that command something, verses that require obedience, are "law" verses; whereas verses that promise something are "gospel" verses. The whole Bible is read this way, with the understanding that law is bad and gospel is good, so that if someone comes along and teaches that it is necessary to obey God in order to be saved, he is said to be preaching the law (gasp!) and is thereby denying the gospel.
  - b. I'm not making this up.
    - i. Henry Soltau, in a work on the tabernacle, wrote, "The law came in and interfered with the manifest actings of grace. It, as it were stopped up for a while the wide outflowings of mercy... At Sinai all was changed; *thrice* had Israel, in their own *ignorant self-confidence*, uttered those fearful words, 'All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient' (Ex. xix. 8, xxiv. 3, 7)" (p. 18)

Later he says that Israel had “eagerly and inconsiderately bound themselves” to keep God’s law

He says that the ark of the covenant, where the tablets of stone were placed, was made for the purpose of shutting up out of sight the very ministrations of death, to which they had so eagerly and inconsiderately bound themselves. And thus did He shadow forth the necessity of the law being removed out of the way” (p. 21)

- ii. C. I. Scofield of the *Scofield Reference Bible*, picks up this same theme. After foolishly arguing that the Ten Commandments are not the rule of life for Christians, he says that the tables of the law were kept in the ark of the covenant for the purpose of hiding them. And then adds “I was reserved to modern nominalists to wrench these holy and just but deathful tables from underneath the mercy-seat and the atoning blood, and erect them in Christian churches as the rule of Christian life” (*Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth*, p. 42)
- c. God has not called us to simply believe certain propositions, as if being a Christian was simply a matter of giving mental assent to doctrinal truth.
- d. God has called us to the “obedience of faith”. This is the language of Paul in Romans: “the obedience of faith.”
  - i. He describes the purpose of his apostolic ministry in these terms: “We have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations” (Rom. 1:5; cf. 16:26); not simply to bring about a mental assent to certain propositions, to bring about the obedience of faith—that is, the obedience that faith possesses.

- e. Consider this, though we often speak of the gospel as something to be believed, Scripture often speaks of it as something to be obeyed.
  - i. “God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus” (2 Thes. 1:6-8)
  - ii. “It is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?” (1 Pet. 4:17)
- f. Likewise, the *truth* is not only something to be believed, but something to be obeyed ().
  - i. “For those who are self-seeking and *do not obey the truth*, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury” (Rom. 2:8)
  - ii. “Having purified your souls by your *obedience to the truth* for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart” (1 Pet. 2:22)
- g. So also, the faith is not merely something to be believed, but to be obeyed
  - i. “And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith” (Acts 6:7)
- h. There is no disjunction between faith and obedience, or between faith and works. Faith is an obedient faith (Rom. 1:5; 16:26), a working faith (Gal. 5:6)

V. Read and comment on select passages in the book...

VI. Conclusion

*Finis*

