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"CHRISTIANS TO ACTION STATIONS!!"

An outline study of Jude - an important little book for today.

By Rev Ivan Foster

Introduction.

When this book was written is not readily ascertained. However, it is widely believed to have been written at least 30 years into the apostolic age - somewhere around 65 AD. It was likely written before the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD.

The reason why it was written is easily seen from the verses 3-4. "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ."

The epistle greatly resembles the 2nd chapter of 2 Peter. This in itself indicates the concern there was amongst the first generation of apostolic preachers and pastors regarding the inroads of false teachers and false teaching. Paul's warnings in Acts 20:28-30; 1 Timothy 4; 2 Timothy 3 as well as numerous other warnings scattered throughout the New Testament epistles serve to highlight this threat facing the early church.

We are inclined to think of those days of Holy Ghost power as somewhat idyllic days. They were in truth no such thing. Persecution and satanic attacks through false teachers were the norm. In a similar fashion, we tend to think that revival would bring tranquillity and unity and peace and joy to God's people. It would on an individual level but for the people of God collectively there would be the same storm of hatred and opposition as faced the early church. I always think of what we read in 1 Samuel 7:8-10. "And the children of Israel said to Samuel, Cease not to cry unto the LORD our God for us, that he will save us out of the hand of the Philistines. And Samuel took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a burnt offering wholly unto the LORD: and Samuel cried unto the LORD for Israel; and the LORD heard him. And as Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel: but the LORD thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them; and they were smitten before Israel." Please note those words in verse 10: "And as Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel."

It has ever been so and will ever be so. When God's people begin once again to plead the blood of Christ and cry unto the Lord God against their enemies then those enemies react with fury.

That explains the terrible onslaught of falsehood and error that threatened the church in Jude's day.

This is most certainly a book for today.

1. THE FAITH IS UNDER ATTACK, VERSES 1-4.

The author identified.

We really know very little about the author of this brief but important epistle. He calls himself "the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James," verse 1. There have been quite some differences of opinion as to which James is meant though I believe the matter is clear.

There were two men called James among the apostles. "James and John . . . James the son of Alphaeus," Luke 6:14-15. There were also two of the name of Judas, or Jude; but there is no difficulty in determining which of them was the author of this epistle, for the other had the surname of Iscariot, and he was the trai-



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Luke's catalogue also lists "Judas the brother of James." So, Jude was the son of Alphaeus and brother of James.

It is further to be noted that Jude was placed amongst the apostles in Acts 1:13. "And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James."

The James who was slain by Herod, Acts 12:2, can hardly be referred to here, as he had been dead some time when Jude's epistle was written. Furthermore, as that James was the brother of John, who was then living, it would have been much more natural for him to have mentioned that he was the brother of John, that beloved disciple.

The other James, "James the Less," was still living and was a prominent man in Jerusalem; and besides, was known as the brother of the Lord Jesus. That would make Jude also a brother of the Lord Jesus. This was stated for us by Paul in Galatians 1:19. "But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother."

This was clearly stated for us by Matthew in Matthew 13:55. "Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas?"

It must be noted that Jude does not claim that wonderful and unique earthly relationship with the Lord when seeking to identify himself. Why not? It would appear that he preferred to be known as "the servant of Jesus Christ" rather than lay claim to having an earthly, human, physical link to Christ. To be the half-brother of the Saviour was a most wonderful thing and yet he elevates his spiritual link to Christ above that.

Lesson

There is a deep lesson there.

Earthly, physical relationships count for nothing regarding our eternal and spiritual wellbeing. That needs to be noted by those who have godly, Christ-fearing parents. Being the offspring of such true Christians does not, cannot, obtain for you a place in heaven.

That is what the absence of any reference to Jude's human relationship with Christ teaches us. Let us make sure that we are born again, having received the Lord Jesus by faith into our heart and life and are thereby members of God's family and servants of Jesus Christ.

2. THE ADDRESSEES LISTED.

The titles given to believers in Holy Scripture are of great importance and should be studied carefully.

Here is how Jude addresses them. "To them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called."

The work of the Trinity of Persons in the Godhead in the redemption of the believer is mentioned here. How great must be that salvation which is the result of the labours of the Triune God!

First of all there is a reference to the work of God the Father. A Christian is someone "sanctified by God the Father."

This is a reference to that act of eternally electing a soul unto salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus it was said to Jeremiah: "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations," Jeremiah 1:5. Jeremiah had been set aside by God, before his birth, both to be saved and also to be a servant of His. The elect of God



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are, by God the Father sanctified and set apart in this wonderful act of love. How exquisitely this truth is stated for us in Ephesians 1:3-6. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved."

There is a reference to the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the Godhead. The elect of God are in Christ, "preserved in Jesus Christ."

1. They are in his heart. He loves them from all eternity. "The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee," Jeremiah 31:3. "We love him, because he first loved us," 1 John 4:19.
2. They are in his arms. He carries them in His arms. "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young," Isaiah 40:11.

"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand," John 10:27-28.

"What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost," Luke 15:4-6.

3. They are in his prayers. "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine," John 17:9.

"I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil," John 17:15.

"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one," John 17:20-22.

"Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us," Romans 8:34.

"Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them," Hebrews 7:25.

It is with them as John Gill states it: "They are preserved not from indwelling sin, nor from the temptations of Satan, nor from doubts and fears and unbelief, nor from slips and falls into sin; but from the tyranny and dominion of sin, from being devoured by Satan, and from a total and final falling away; they are preserved in the love of God, and of Christ; in the covenant of grace; in a state of justification and adoption; and in the paths of truth, faith, and holiness; and are preserved safe to the heavenly kingdom and glory: their other character follows."

4. They will be with him in glory. "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also," John 14:2-3.

"Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world," John 17:24.



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“And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together;” Romans 8:17.

“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord,” 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17.

How secure are those redeemed by the precious blood of Christ!

Note the work of the blessed Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Godhead: “. . . and called.” The Holy Spirit is not mentioned by name but His vital, essential work is. The absence of the Spirit’s name is in keeping with the demeanour He manifests as He executes his work. Listen to the words of the Saviour as He explains the work of the Holy Spirit: “Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come,” John 16:13. Thus, this little book which is the product of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, makes no mention here of His name, just His work. The Holy Spirit calls the elect, for whom Christ died as an atonement for their sins on the cross, by the word of the gospel, applying that word to their hearts and working faith in Christ and repentance toward God.

“And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years,” Genesis 6:3.

“Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ,” Acts 20:21.

“Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers,” Acts 2:37-42.

The above-mentioned verses all highlight the glorious work of the Holy Ghost in the work of regeneration and conversion of the sinner.

He it is Who strives with them when they are in their natural state of rebellion (Genesis 6:3).

He it is Who works faith within the heart of the elect in the promises of God set forth in the gospel and repentance toward God for their rebellious defiance of Him (Acts 2:37-42, 20:21).

These then are the people to whom Jude is writing. It is to all the true saints of God, everywhere and in every age.

I repeat, this epistle is for us, Christian, today.

3. THE GREETING EXPRESSED.

Here is how Jude greets his readers: “Mercy unto you, and peace, and love, be multiplied.”

Jude desires the choicest blessings upon those to whom he writes.

- a. Mercy - the pardon of all their sins and acceptance with God;
- b. Peace - with God, with their fellow-men, in their own consciences, and in the prospect of death;



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c. Love - to God, to the brethren, to all the world. What blessings are there which these do not include?

Treasure

Few words can often contain the greatest of treasures. John 3:16 is evidence of this. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life," John 3:16. Twenty-five words that embrace all the glories of the gospel treasure of heaven!

In this epistle, Jude intends to press upon his readers all that these three blessed words, "mercy, peace, love" intimate.

However, it is an epistle that is very much 'warlike' in its terms and tone and yet "mercy, peace, love" are promoted by its teaching and exhortations.

What insipid, bland notions many have of the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ! Listen to the spoutings of the ecumenists and liberals and note the featureless and characterless notions they have of the Saviour and His Word. There is no place in their perceptions of the Saviour for the robust terminology of Jude or indeed of the Saviour Himself. They rail against the 'fundamentalist' for his 'unloving' condemnations of those who would pervert the Word of God and divert God's people from the paths of righteousness. They fail to note (or more likely deliberately close their eyes to) the vigorous language of the Saviour in passages such as Matthew 23:1-36. Here are found memorable terms for those who are the enemies of Christ.

"But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!" "Woe unto you, ye blind guides." "Ye fools and blind." "Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel." "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness." "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?"

These are the words of One determined to get across the solemn dreadfulness of disobeying God and His Word and defying His warnings. It was the attitude and language the apostles had also imbibed. Paul said: "Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech," 2 Corinthians 3:12. John Gill comments thus upon these words of Paul. "Plain and intelligible words, not ambiguous ones: or 'boldness'; we are not afraid of men nor devils; we are not terrified by menaces, stripes, imprisonment, and death itself: or 'freedom of speech'; we speak out all our mind, which is the mind of Christ; we declare the whole counsel of God, hide and conceal nothing that may be profitable to the churches; we are not to be awed by the terror, or drawn by the flatteries of men to cover the truth; we speak it out plainly, clearly, with all evidence and perspicuity."

This is what marks the epistle of Jude and it is with such plainness he would impart those blessings suggested in the words of his greeting: "Mercy unto you, and peace, and love, be multiplied."

Straightforward

There can be an enjoyment of "mercy, peace, and love" only under the ministry of straightforward preaching of the whole counsel of God and not the 'sanitised' gospel that foolish, wicked men would proffer to their flock.

I have often steeled myself to read the 'joint Christmas message' of the local Roman Catholic and Church of Ireland (Anglican) bishops in our area. What 'mush' it always is! Meaningless drivel which will always gain a headline in the local press but which will provide no help whatsoever to a poor seeking soul. Rather, it will drive men and women on down the road of self-righteousness, of so-called good works, of self-reliance and the vain hope that their church-going and perceived good works will gain them entrance to heaven. In truth, these men and their ilk are but assisting men and women down the road to hell. Of them the Saviour said: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves," Matthew 23:15.



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It was under the "blood and thunder" preaching of men such as Martin Luther, John Knox and John Calvin, to name but three of God's mighty reformers, that multitudes of men, women and children entered into the blessings of "Mercy unto you, and peace, and love, be multiplied." Such spiritual deliverances can be wrought today amongst the nations only by preaching of the same content and style that God so gloriously owned in former times.

4. THE BURDEN OF JUDE'S EPISTLE.

Here is what Jude was pressed in his soul to warn the people of God about.

"Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ," Jude 1:3-4.

The call to battle that Jude was urging upon the people of God was not born out of a cantankerous, quarrelsome spirit but was born out of a distress and anxiety for the honour of God and a concern for the wellbeing of the saints, in the face of the corruptions that evil men would introduce to the church, under the guise of being the 'grace of God'!

It is clear that it was the original purpose of Jude to write, simply expounding the truths of the 'common salvation', that is, the one, common message of salvation that God has revealed unto all men, Jew and Gentile alike.

That was his original intention and, of course, it is the universal burden upon the hearts of all God's servants throughout the ages. Each Sabbath, and on the many other occasions that congregations are convened together to hear God's Word, it is the desire of the true servant of God to expound the 'common salvation.' However, it is clear from the actions of Jude, that there are occasions when the pastor must leave aside that essential labour and take up the sword and go to war against the 'invader'!

"Cursed be he that doeth the work of the LORD deceitfully, and cursed be he that keepeth back his sword from blood," Jeremiah 48:10.

"Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the LORD, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the LORD, to the help of the LORD against the mighty," Judges 5:23.

"Then said Samuel, Bring ye hither to me Agag the king of the Amalekites. And Agag came unto him delicately. And Agag said, Surely the bitterness of death is past. And Samuel said, As thy sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women. And Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the LORD in Gilgal," 1 Samuel 15:32-33.

All of these verses serve to underscore the war that the people of God are engaged in. In these New Testament times, ours may not be the sword of steel but the war we must engage in, wielding the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, is every bit as real and invariably uncomfortable as was any Old Testament battle!

That is what this epistle is all about as I hope we will discover as we pursue our study of it.