

JUDE

Lesson 1 w/Answers

Jude 1:1-25

Jude is one of the shortest books in the Bible. The book of Jude is a timely study, as its message grows stronger each day that we come closer to the second coming of Christ. We note in the opening of his writing that Jude states he wanted to write and tell everyone about "the salvation we share," but he has now decided that there is something even more important than that, and it will consume the rest of his letter. It will be the focus of this study.

Respond to the following question:

1. What could be more important to Jude and us than sharing your faith with other believers?
 - a. ANSWER: The biggest threat to the Gospel and the Church is false teaching: wolves in sheep's clothing, liars, deceivers, within the church—those who profess to be believers but are not. Jude saw what was happening and realized that he needed to warn his readers about the danger that was already in their midst.

Jude was a solid, mature believer who knew Jesus personally. We know this from Matthew 13:55 and Mark 6:3, where we learn that he was the brother of James. Like James, Jude was a half-brother to Jesus. (Both James and Jude were children of Mary and Joseph, after the virgin birth of Jesus.) Also note that James was the pastor of the large church present in Jerusalem at the time of Jude's writing.

Just as Jesus did during his earthly ministry, Jude is now warning the false believers and deceivers within the church of their coming judgment. Like the Pharisees, these liars and imposters lead believers astray with their false teaching, causing divisions within the church and putting up stumbling blocks as obstacles to new believers. Jude's warning and instructions are as relevant now as they were then, and they provide us with specific instructions for today as we draw nearer to the coming of Jesus and the true Messiah.

Continuing:

2. Read Jude verses 1-4. How does Jude say that these deceivers get into the church body?
 - a. ANSWER: They creep in secretly. They are not open about their intent to mislead, to teach false teachings, or to cause divisions within the body. Instead, in a cunning and deceitful way, they gain your trust and begin a relationship that will, if not stopped, cause great harm to many believers and to those the Gospel is trying to reach.
3. What is Jude asserting regarding these "ungodly people" within the church body? How are they perverting the Word of God for their own good? Why would believers within the church fall for these lies?
 - a. ANSWER: Regarding those "who pervert the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord," Jude asserts two distinct things that they are accomplishing: (1) perverting the grace of God as a license for immorality, and (2) denying that Christ is our "only" Sovereign and Lord.

Jude's focus is on false teachers within the church body. Accordingly, how is it possible for someone to believe these false teachings when it clearly results in "a license for immorality?": What is Jude referring to, and how would it apply today?

Jude is addressing a subject that we hear very little about today: licentiousness. Licentiousness essentially refers to behavior that is not restrained, particularly as it relates to moral behavior. I would guess that you have rarely heard anyone use this term, particularly inside the church body; however, today we live in a world with very little restraint when it comes to moral behavior. Practically everything that mankind does, or even thinks of doing, is broadly seen as morally acceptable. This was also true in Jude's day, and he observed this type of behavior becoming a part of acceptable church behavior, using distorted views and interpretations of scripture.

In our response to question 3, above, we noted that Jude was addressing two actions, one of which was perverting the grace of God as a license for immorality. So be warned and be on the lookout, as this is happening in churches today.

Jude was referring to the twisted view these people were applying to Paul's teaching about grace. Ephesians 2:8-9 is but one example of Paul's teaching on grace.

"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast."

By injecting their own personal desires into this doctrine, they essentially taught that since you have been saved by faith and not works, your works have no effect on your salvation. Therefore, once you are saved, you can do anything that you desire and it will have no effect on your salvation.

Jude then provides examples of those caught in this lie and the consequences that follow. He points out that both the angelic world and man's world will come under judgment—that God is not mocked nor fooled by their lies, He punishes those who follow after them. The exiles from Egypt and the residents of Sodom and Gomorrah are just a couple of the many examples in the Bible.

I will also point out that, while much of the Bible appears to refer to this behavior as sexually-oriented, licentiousness behavior means much more. It can manifest itself in many ways, such as financial corruption, gluttony, the abuse of power, and so on. We within the Church body need to be on the lookout for all of its manifestations, and not just the sexually immoral aspects.

I am including an example of these below in Acts 4:32-37 and Acts 5:1-10. As you read this passage, contrast the Christian behavior in Acts 4 with the false Christian behavior in Acts 5 and the consequences. Note, as well, that all of this scripture is referring to people inside the church.

ACTS 4

³² All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. ³³ With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all ³⁴ that there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales ³⁵ and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need.

³⁶ Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means "son of encouragement"), ³⁷ sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles' feet.

ACTS 5

¹ Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property. ² With his wife's full knowledge he kept back part of the money for himself, but brought the rest and put it at the apostles' feet.

³ Then Peter said, "Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? ⁴ Didn't it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied just to human beings but to God."

⁵ When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died. And great fear seized all who heard what had happened. ⁶ Then some young men came forward, wrapped up his body, and carried him out and buried him.

⁷ About three hours later his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. ⁸ Peter asked her, "Tell me, is this the price you and Ananias got for the land?"

"Yes," she said, "that is the price."

⁹ Peter said to her, "How could you conspire to test the Spirit of the Lord? Listen! The feet of the men who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out also."

¹⁰ At that moment she fell down at his feet and died. Then the young men came in and, finding her dead, carried her out and buried her beside her husband.

The important thing to note in this passage is that Ananias and Sapphira, both members of the church, were outwardly exhibiting excellent behavior by selling their land and donating the proceeds to church, just as all the others had done (cited in Acts Chapter 4). But, the evil in their hearts and their real motives reveal to us everything that we must be on the watch for within our own church body, and within our own walk with Christ. We need to always be careful that our motives and desires are for Christ and his church, and not for our own selfish desires. This is the lesson in Jude's writing:

^{14b} "See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones ¹⁵ to judge everyone, and to convict all of them of all the ungodly acts they have committed in their ungodliness, and of all the defiant words ungodly sinners have spoken against him." ¹⁶ These people are grumblers and faultfinders; they follow their own evil desires; they boast about themselves and flatter others for their own advantage. Jude 1: 14-16 [NIV]

As we approach the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, we must heed Jude's warning, as well as that of Paul in 2 Timothy 4:3, "For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear."

Let's continue to pray for God's protection of His Church, and be on guard that we do not fall into following false teachings. We must keep the Gospel pure and our faith strong as we see the day of his coming approaching.

Thanks for studying with us!

In Christ,

Wes