

The Letter of Jude

Jude 1-4: Called to Contend

Sunday, September 15, 2019

Introduction

It's no secret that we live in a time of rapid change. Things that once seemed clear-cut and settled are now up for debate. Moral issues that for most of history were never questioned are being challenged. While truth is still a part of the cultural vocabulary, truth is being discussed in a new way. The belief in absolute truth has been replaced by the need for personal truth.

But while we may be tempted to think that these kinds of challenges are new and that the Christian faith is facing uncharted waters, that's not the case. In fact, not long after Jesus returned to heaven, during the first generation of the church, a man name Jude wrote a letter urging Christians to contend for the faith and to defend it against those who would seek to alter its' message.

The primary theme of Jude is that Christians have been given a body of faith. We have been given a message that is completely true and sufficient and we are to guard it. It's also an encouragement to faithfulness and endurance.

The Writer of the Letter: Who is Jude? (Jude 1a)

- **Jude's Background** – Jude identifies himself as the brother of James. Based on other passages in the New Testament (Matthew 13:55, Mark 6:3) we recognize that he is not only the brother of James, but also the half brother Jesus.
- **Jude's Allegiance** – While it may seem odd that Jude doesn't directly identify his familial connection to Jesus, his silence is a way of exalting Jesus. He makes it clear that he doesn't think of Jesus primarily as his brother. He identifies as the servant of Jesus and sees Him as his master and Lord.
- **Jude's Authority** – Jude's introduction emphasizes that he isn't writing based on his own authority. Jude is writing as a servant, as one who has placed himself under the authority and the charge of his master.

The Recipients of the Letter: Jude's Audience (Jude 1b)

- **A Description of the People of God (our blessed state)** – While Jude doesn't explicitly identify his audience he makes it clear that he is writing to people who have a relationship with God through Jesus. The bulk of the letter is going to focus on the importance of standing for the faith, but in this verse Jude makes it clear that being a Christian is not based on an intellectual adherence to a set of beliefs.

- **Called by God** – The idea of 'being called' is a reference to the work that God does in changing hearts and bringing people into a relationship with Himself (John 6:44). It's a reminder that if you are a part of the family of God it's not because you were smart enough or good enough. It's not because you were in the right family or the right church. It's because God changed your heart and gave you the ability to see your need for Him (Ephesians 2:1-9, 2 Timothy 1:8-9).
- **Loved by God** – As those who have been brought into relationship with God (an act of His love) we now live in His love. God has set His love on us and it is a love that will never end or fade (Psalm 103:11, 1 John 4:10, 3:1). As we consider the often-difficult road of faith we can rest in this, His love will always remain (Romans 8:38-39).
- **Kept by God** - As we think about what it looks like to defend the faith it may be very easy for us to think that somehow we are strong enough or smart enough to keep believing. Jude reminds us we are kept by God's power. The reason we still believe is because of His powerful hold (John 10:27-29, 17:9-19; Romans 8:29-30; Jude 24-25).
- **A Prayer for the People of God (Jude 2)** – While the majority of Jude's letter describes the call to contend and guard the faith, Jude first takes time to ask God's blessing on His people. While they are likely to endure opposition and pain, Jude prays for mercy, peace and love in abundance.

Jude's Appeal: A Call to Contend (Jude 3)

- **A New Letter** – Jude acknowledges a change of plans. While he had hoped to write a letter exalting in their shared faith, a change in circumstances has made it necessary for him to write this appeal to contend. He urges them to defend the faith that has been entrusted to them.
- **There is one faith and it does not change** – While our world no longer believes in the existence of absolute truth, Jude's appeal is based on this very thing. He emphasizes that there is one faith that has been delivered to the people of God. God has given us His Word and the message of the Gospel and they do not change with the passing of time (2 Peter 1:19-21).
- **A faith that must be defended** – While both the beginning and end of Jude's letter make it clear that God will save His people, the bulk of the letter emphasizes the need for Christians to contend for the truth. The call isn't to sit back and rest, the call is to stand up and contend.

The Reason for Jude's Appeal (Jude 4) – The nature of the opposition will be further discussed in the coming verses, but verse 4 makes it clear that there are those within the church who are distorting the Gospel and denying the truth. This is why Jude appeals to the people of God to contend for the faith.