

The Letter of Jude

Recognizing the Threat: A Rejection of the Authority of God

Jude 8-16

Sunday, September 29, 2019

Introduction

As Christians we identify as followers. We call ourselves disciples. We are very open about this reality: we are a people under authority. We agree with Paul and declare that *we are not our own, we were bought with a price* (1 Cor. 6:19-20), *we live as those who are the Lord's* (Romans 14:7-8) and *we have been crucified, we no longer live but Christ lives in us* (Galatians 2:20).

As the people of God we believe and proclaim that all authority belongs to God and that we must live in full submission to His will, but we are also very aware of the temptation to exert our own will. It is our nature to want to live by our own thoughts, ideas and desires.

We are constantly tempted to find other authorities and to elevate them to the place where God belongs. And along the same lines we must always be aware of others who are seeking to usurp God's authority. This is exactly the situation that Jude is writing to warn Christians about. He is writing to encourage and exhort the church to be aware of those who (in subtle ways) reject God's authority and live by their own values and desires.

A description of the opposition: Those who reject the authority of God (Jude 8-10)

- **Context** – Jude 4-16 is one long description of those who are threatening the church. In verses 5-7 Jude describes three examples of those who were unfaithful and rebellious, and now Jude continues to show how the false teachers in the church are carrying on the tradition.
- **They live for their own desires** – Jude says they are a people who defile the flesh. They live for themselves and thereby reject the authority of God.
- **They reject the authority of God** – This is the main issue and it is the underlying factor in everything else Jude says about the opposition. They don't see God rightly and they don't submit to His rule.
- **They blaspheme the messengers of God (angels)** – Angels are often described as those who carried the Law of God to the people (Heb. 2:1-2; Acts 7:53; Gal. 3:19). To oppose God's messengers is to oppose Him.
- **The magnitude of their rejection (vs. 9)** - The Archangel Michael, being the chief angel of God, did not see it as his place to speak blasphemy against the devil, but left that judgment to God. This highlights the magnitude of the arrogance and rebellion of those who Jude is describing.

A description of the opposition: Their alternative authority (vv. 8, 10)

- **They rely on their own wisdom and trust their own instincts** – Jude makes it clear that instead of submitting to the authority of God, these false teachers are relying on their own thinking and view of the world. Of course, the Bible is clear that our minds and ability to reason are corrupted by sin and are a faulty guide (2 Pet. 2:12; 1 Cor. 3:18-4:2).

Examples of those who rejected the authority of God

- After describing those who are living by their own authority Jude relays three examples of others who disregarded God's authority and lived in selfish ways, convinced that their ways were better. They are also examples of how destructive this kind of living can be.
- **Cain** (Gen. 4); **Balaam** (Numbers 22-24, 31:15-16; Deuteronomy 23:4; 2 Peter 2:15-16); **Korah** (Numbers 16)

The threat of the opposition: The subtle and significant danger to the Church (Jude 12-13)

- In two verses Jude gives 6 metaphors describing those who are threatening the church. They emphasize the subtle nature of the threat to the church as well as the danger. Those who come in and live by their own authority often appear to have wisdom and answers, but in the end they will never be able to fulfill their promises. They are fruitless, they can't satisfy, they bring destruction and they are destined for judgment.

God's judgment for those who oppose the truth (Jude 14-16)

- In vv. 14-16 Jude once again emphasizes the certainty of God's judgment toward those who reject His authority and oppose the truth. They live for themselves and in the end they will answer for their disregard of God.

Application:

- **We must recognize and submit to the authority of God** – This is not an easy calling and it will likely require a daily fight, but we must strive to live as those who trust God's authority above all else. The first step in submitting to His authority is repenting of our sins and trusting in Jesus.
- **We should seek fellowship with others who recognize and submit to the authority of God** - It is so easy to be deceived and caught off guard. This is why we need one another. We need others to remind us of what God has said and to encourage us in our submission to Him.
- **We must guard ourselves and the church against those who would undermine or reject the authority of God** – This is the primary message of Jude's letter; we are to contend for the faith and stand up for the truth against those who would minimize or disregard the authority of God.