

LVII. Traveling Route 66: The Bible in Biblical Perspective
The Journey with Christ, the Promised One
“Jude—A Book of Warning and Admonition”
The Book of Jude
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November 17, 2013 – Evening Sermon

We are in the book of Jude at mile marker 65 in our series Travelling Route 66. I am a child of the 60s and I always have a problem when I have to preach from the book of Jude because I always want to break out in the song “Hey, Jude” at any moment. I won’t do that though but if it had anything to do with the Bible I might do that but it doesn’t. I’m excited to be preaching from this book because it is a precursor to what I will be doing in 2014. Given what is happening in the church today theologically, ecclesiastically and confessionally and given what is happening in our country and in the culture it’s clear that God’s people need to be challenged once again on how to effectively contend for the faith. What are things we need to be aware of here? Our theme verse for 2014 is actually found in Jude and I will start this on the first Sunday of January 2014. I will also refer to it in this study as well.

Let’s start our study of Jude. Jude 1:1-2 says [1] *Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James, To those who are called, beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ: [2] May mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you.* This opening introduction gets us started in the way we have approached each book and this one is no different. So let’s get started with answering our questions.

Who is the author of this epistle? Clearly the author identifies himself as Jude. The problem is there are eight different ‘Judes’ or ‘Judas’ in the Bible. So which one is this? In fact two of them come to mind as we read this opening. Two of the disciples were named Jude or Judas. One can be ruled out very quickly and that was the one who betrayed the Lord. Could the other Jude have been the one to write this? We are helped in narrowing down the field by noticing this Jude identifies himself not only as a servant of Christ but as the brother of James. We know there were a few James’ in the New Testament but there was really only one who would qualify by just saying ‘James.’ All the other James’ had to have a modifier but the one James who had risen to such stature to be known only by ‘James’ was the half-brother of Jesus, son of Mary and Joseph, who the Bible tells us did not believe in the Lord nor did any of his brothers until after the resurrection.

This Jude identifies himself as the brother of James and this one doesn’t need a modifier so we are talking about James the half-brother of Jesus. That would make Jude the brother of James, the half-brother of Jesus also. As we know Jesus had brothers. One of them was named James, one Joseph, and one is named Jude. That is the Jude that is writing here. It is pretty well accepted that with the Judes mentioned in the Bible that this is the one who is the brother of Jesus.

Where is the author writing this book? That’s a good question. I’d love to be able to say “I don’t have the slightest idea, but I think...” and then give you an answer but I really don’t have the slightest idea. There is nothing to give away where he is when he is writing this epistle. Even extra Biblical history doesn’t have anything so I don’t know where he is writing from. Here is my guess. My original thought was that it might

be Jerusalem but I think it was outside of Jerusalem because Jude is dealing with a certain kind of heresy that Peter also dealt with. In fact II Peter and Jude are very similar in what they deal with in content, style, purpose and focus. Peter is writing to believers outside of Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria. So I think Jude is writing from a place where he can address believers outside Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria.

When did he write Jude? We don't know have a lot of clues here but most think he probably wrote this epistle sometime between the years 63 to 65 AD. There is only one reason we take that. If you read the book of Jude and the epistle of II Peter you'll see great similarities even to the point that same illustrations are used. Clearly they had read each other very much like you see the Gospel writers quoting from one another at times. The question is did Peter write first and then Jude? The way they are constructed it is pretty clear that Peter is borrowing from Jude. In other words, Peter has the same burden and as he addresses it he is making use of things that Jude wrote earlier. Now Peter would have been dead under persecution by 66 AD. So that means Peter wrote his epistle sometime between 62 to 65 AD and he must have been able to get his hands on what Jude had written prior to that time. So very likely Jude is writing after the Gospel has spread from Jerusalem in a significant way and enough time for this heresy of licentiousness and libertinism where people used grace as an excuse for immorality and teach false things, to transpire.

That's why I don't think Jude is writing from Jerusalem. The heresy that attacked the Gospel in Jerusalem was legalism. The heresy of licentiousness and libertinism seemed to take place outside of Judea and Samaria. There is a possibility since Jude very likely was perhaps the youngest of the brothers of Jesus that he like John could have lived into the next century but we don't tend to think he wrote that much later because, while you need enough time for this heresy to have developed, he had to have written before Peter died. Therefore 63 to 65 AD is the date that most feel comfortable with. So let's go to the next question.

To whom did he write this book to? We are told whom he wrote this to, not with specificity but with definitive words. James 1:1 says *...To those who are called, beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ.* One he wrote to those who are called, two he wrote to the beloved in the Father and three he wrote to those kept in Jesus Christ. Jude has a penchant for writing in triads. It is very much like Paul when he uses faith, hope and love. Paul loves to write in triads and Jude loves to write in triads on steroids. In the opening how does Jude describe his audience? He writes to those who are called, those who are beloved in God the Father and those who are kept in Jesus Christ. James 1:18 refers to us as the first fruits, those kept in Christ. We not only have an inheritance but we are an inheritance for Christ. We are being kept for Jesus Christ. So we're not only kept for Christ but we belong to him.

Then Jude gives this blessing in Jude 1:2 that says *[2] May mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you.* There is another triad – mercy, peace and love. By the way, there is another triad in those opening verses. Which Person of the Trinity called you from darkness to light? It is the Holy Spirit. So you're called by the Holy Spirit, you are loved in God the Father and you are kept for Jesus Christ. Right there in these two opening verses are three triads. You are called, loved, and kept. You're called with the understanding it is by the Spirit, you're loved by God the Father and you're kept for Jesus Christ. Then Jude prays that you'll have mercy, peace and love multiplied in your life.

The point I want to make here though is to what audience does Jude address his book. He is not addressing it to anyone individual or anyone church. This epistle belongs in that section we call a general or a catholic epistle. It is meant for the church universal. If you're a Christian then you were called and you fit in Jude's audience. You are loved by God the Father and He loved you so much He gave His Son. You are beloved. You are being kept for Jesus Christ. So you fit here. This is not framed for one person or one church that you then interpret, for this was actually designed for a general application to be sent to all of us. It is what we call a general epistle or one of the catholic (universal) church epistles.

Why does Jude write this book? Jude 1:3-4 says [3] *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.* [4] *For 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.* Basically he was all set to write one letter and then he found it necessary to write another one, this letter.

His appeal for this letter is that you contend earnestly for the faith. The word contend is the same word we get in our language for agonize. Jude wants us to agonize for the faith. Give yourself to contend for the faith which was once and for all delivered to the saints. That is what Jude is calling upon us to do. Why? He gives us two reasons. One is there is false teaching and the reason there is false teaching is two there are false teachers. False teachers don't come with signs. They creep in unnoticed. Satan loves for us to abandon the faith through the pressure of the culture from the outside. Satan also loves and maybe much more effectively, to get us to abandon the faith from the deceptive teaching from the inside.

Then Jude gets very specific. Jude says these people have crept in and they are perverting the grace of God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord. Peter picks up on the same thing here. Peter uses the same language and same illustrations. Peter says 'Beware of those who use their grace given liberty as a cloak for licentiousness.' I want you to watch both of those. There are two Gospel errors that we always need to be aware of. One preacher put it this way. If you think of the Gospel as the highway to heaven there are two ditches you have to stay out of on both sides. One ditch is legalism, whereby the highway is blocked by teaching that it is through your works that God is able to save you and through your works that you're saved. That is a dead legalism. The other ditch is that because you're not saved by your works then it really doesn't matter whether I work or not because I'm already forgiven so the more I sin the more grace I get. In other words, it doesn't matter how I live and that's the other ditch you have to watch out for. It does matter how you live. It is not because the way you live saves you but it's because of the way you live that shows the evidence of your salvation.

Paul tackles the problem of legalism in Galatians and some in Romans but particularly in the book of Galatians. Most of the time, Paul is dealing with both of these problems. Ephesians 2:8-9 says [8] *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,* [9] *not a result of works, so that no one may boast.* Bingo! Our works don't save us because our works are always polluted with our sins. He doesn't stop there. Ephesians 2:10 says [10] *For we are his workmanship,*

created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

So I want to switch metaphors here. Think of the Gospel as the River of Life. Legalism dams up the River. So in Ephesians 2:8-9 Paul put a stick of dynamite under the dam and blew it up by saying [8] *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, [9] not a result of works, so that no one may boast.* Licentiousness and libertinism pollutes the River of Life. In Ephesians 2:10 Paul brings out his environmental, theologically accurate protection agency vacuum and he vacuums the creek of licentiousness lest it pollute the River of Life when he says [10] *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*

Jude and II Peter are focused on the error of licentiousness that seemed to be rampant. The issue among the people that were on their mind and heart led by the Spirit was not the problem of legalism but their issue was the problem of libertinism and the false teachers who had crept in. So Jude is confronting and calling the church to reject and contend with false teachers who practice and promote a licentious doctrine of God's grace or as Peter would say 'who use the Gospel of grace as a cloak to hide their immorality and ungodliness.'

I think this is one of the greatest challenges of our day today. I want to give you one reason why I believe we need to take it on. I am actually a member of a fraternity group of pastors called the Gospel Reformation Network and we're particularly focused on this issue of preaching the Gospel and calling people to holiness, saying 'no' to legalism and 'no' to licentiousness at both the same time. The tendency is to say I grew up in a legalistic church so I'm going to go be licentious for a while. I grew up in a licentious situation so we need some legalism. Both of those are dwarfed views of grace. God's grace freely forgives you of all of the guilt of all of your sins, not because of your works but in spite of your works. God's grace also transforms you and liberates you from the power of sin that even though you have sin living in you, you do not have to sin. God's grace gives you the power to kill sin.

There is the dwarf view of grace that the Bible is all about justification and adoption or the dwarf view that it is all about your sanctification. No, it is all about the legal work of forgiving you of all of your sins and your position of salvation in Christ and the powerful work of liberating you increasingly from the practice of sin by having destroyed the dominion of sin in your life. The reason I think you have to keep preaching both of those issues is because if the church ever becomes legalistic then the next generation will become licentious. If a church says we were legalistic so now we're going to swing the pendulum over here then if you combat legalism by promoting libertinism and licentiousness then you'll be setting up a legalistic church for your grandchildren, because it will swing back the other way. So you want to say 'no' to both of them at one in the same time and pursue holiness with humble reliance.

When people join our church you hear this vow. Here is how our forefathers put it. They would combat this even in the church vows whether by baptismal or membership. In humble reliance upon God's grace (I can't do this by myself) and the power of the Holy Spirit I will endeavor. So what is he saying about the Christian life of grace? It is on the one hand 100 percent dependent upon God's grace and power and on the other hand 100 percent engaged by the discipline of grace. It is not disciplined for

grace but the discipline of grace. That's why by God's grace we have to keep focused upon that lest our children inherit a pendulum swing of a church in the other direction.

The other week I received a phone call from a congregation who said "Our pastor is preaching licentiousness and he calls it grace. I think we need a little legalism here. We have too much grace." I said "No, that's not the problem. The problem is not that he is giving you too much grace but he is giving you a dwarfed view of grace. He is only preaching the blessing of grace that positions you in Christ, not the blessing of grace that liberates you from your sin so that you can follow Christ. It's not that he is giving you too much grace, for he is not giving you enough." So by God's grace that's what we need to make sure that we're focused upon. Jude is bringing us to focus on that side of the ditch called licentiousness and libertinism.

Now I'll give you a brief outline of Jude. You have the introduction in Jude 1:1-2. The purpose of Jude is in Jude 1:3-4. Then you have the judgments and cursing upon false teachings and false teachers in Jude 1:5-19 and then the blessings of true teaching and true teachers in Jude 1:20-23. Finally is the conclusion/benediction in Jude 1:24-25.

Let's briefly walk through the book of Jude. Jude 1:5-7 says *[5] Now I want to remind you, although you once fully knew it, that Jesus, who saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe. [6] And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day—[7] just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.*

He is giving three examples of the lethal attraction of licentiousness. There is the attraction of the people who apostatize after the delivery of Egypt. There is the attraction of angels who fell from their abode in the fall of the angels and then the third are those in Sodom and Gomorrah that had fallen into and embraced sexual perversity and then the judgment of God came upon them. Notice he used three historical examples. Peter uses these same examples in II Peter.

Jude 1:8-9 says *[8] Yet in like manner these people also, relying on their dreams, defile the flesh, reject authority, and blaspheme the glorious ones. [9] But when the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, was disputing about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a blasphemous judgment, but said, "The Lord rebuke you."* You won't find this thing about the archangel Michael in the Pentateuch but you'll find it today in a long lost document called the Testament of Moses that doesn't belong in the Scripture, that's not inspired but there a lot of things that are written that are not inspired that are not in the Bible that have true things in them. This is one that Jude under the inspiration of the Spirit tells us this had been an oral tradition that had been affirmed in the Testament of Moses that he quotes and was an actual occurrence that we need to learn from.

Jude 1:10-13 says *[10] But these people blaspheme all that they do not understand, and they are destroyed by all that they, like unreasoning animals, understand instinctively. [11] Woe to them! For they walked in the way of Cain and abandoned themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam's error and perished in Korah's rebellion. [12] These are hidden reefs at your love feasts, as they feast with you without fear, shepherds feeding themselves; waterless clouds, swept along by winds; fruitless trees in*

late autumn, twice dead, uprooted; [13] wild waves of the sea, casting up the foam of their own shame; wandering stars, for whom the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved forever. So he not only has historical and Biblical examples but he also has examples from creation.

Jude 1:14-16 says [14] *It was also about these that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of his holy ones, [15] to execute judgment on all and to convict all the ungodly of all their deeds of ungodliness that they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against him."* [16] *These are grumblers, malcontents, following their own sinful desires; they are loud-mouthed boasters, showing favoritism to gain advantage.* One thing is abundantly clear. Jude has not been to the seeker sensitive sermon preparation here. This is a harsh, definitive, cataclysmic warning as he describes what these false teachers are, what they are doing and what consequences await them and what they are teaching. Now he turns to us.

Jude 1:17-23 says [17] *But you must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. [18] They said to you, "In the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions."* [19] *It is these who cause divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit. [20] But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, [21] keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. [22] And have mercy on those who doubt; [23] save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh.* Then he concludes with this glorious doxology.

Jude 1:24-25 says [24] *Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, [25] to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.* I want to conclude by giving you some themes from this book.

Here are five themes you can see out of the book of Jude. The first theme is all truth is God's truth. Everything in the Bible is true down to the jot and tittle. I believe in verbal plenary inspiration. Every word and the order of words have been given to us by the Holy Spirit. Everything in the Bible is true but not all truth is in the Bible. For instance, from the book of nature I can discern that 2 plus 2 equals 4. I don't care where you go in the universe whenever you put two apples with two apples you'll get four apples. Can you find where it says 2 plus 2 equals 4 in the Bible? Everything I read from the book of nature I have to test by the book of Scripture, God's special revelation because they will never contradict each other if I'm reading them right.

So everything in the Bible is true but not all truth is in the Bible but all truth whether you find it in the book of creation or you find it in the book of special revelation, is God's truth. All truth is God's truth. So here Jude puts in the Bible something from two books that aren't in the Bible because those two statements were true. That's not unusual and I'll show you that by turning to Acts 17. Here is Paul's famous speech to the philosophers where he is preaching Christ and the resurrection but he is telling them they need a Savior and they cannot save themselves. For the sake of time I won't go through his whole sermon.

Acts 17:27-28 says [27] that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he (God) is actually not far from each one of us, [28] for “In him we live and move and have our being”; as even some of your own poets have said, “For we are indeed his offspring.” Paul quotes a pagan poet here. He quotes epicurean philosophers and stoic philosophers. Why? It is because even unbelievers can give statements of truth at times. All truth is God’s truth and Jude shows you that as well as Paul.

You might be thinking “How can I view this?” I would say think of it like a clock. You don’t want to put your trust in a broken clock but it is still right two times a day. So people who don’t know the Lord and even with enmity against the Lord with blasphemous pagan religions can still get things right. So Jude is an example of how he takes these quotes and pulls them in to show us that all truth is God’s truth and that it needs to be framed from the Bible and all that you need is in the Bible, but not all truth is in the Bible.

Here is one more illustration. The book of John two times says “If we recorded everything that Jesus said and did the whole world couldn’t contain the book.” Do you think the Gospels record every single that Jesus preached and taught? I know it doesn’t because John tells me it doesn’t. Do you think everything that Jesus preached and taught was true? So you have all kinds of things that were preached and taught that aren’t even in your Bible. So, all truth is God’s truth.

Theme two is that when you communicate you can be predictable but profoundly illustrative. If I know Jude he’ll come up with three points. Jude is a Presbyterian preacher. Every time you turn around he’ll have three points. In fact, he has three points within one point. Yet notice how attractively illustrative he is as he pulls from creation, history, the Bible, events and prophesies. So he is illustrative and predictable. When you communicate be predictable but also don’t be mundane. Think about the adjectives, adverbs and the sources from every possible illustration to give windows and light for people to grab truth.

The third theme is realization that there is a two-fold Gospel heresy. As I already went over we have to avoid both legalism and libertinism. You don’t want to set up one heresy by avoiding the other by doing the pendulum swing.

The fourth theme is there are false teachers and false teaching. Just because someone stands in the pulpit does not mean that they’re infallible and inerrant. Examine the Scriptures. The Scriptures alone are our only infallible source. Thank God for writers, authors, preachers, teachers, disciplers, and mentors but they nor counsels of the church are inerrant. Only God’s Word is inerrant. Therefore find teachers who with their life and their efforts attempt to be faithful to God’s Word, then you examine the Scriptures to see if these things are so.

The fifth theme is don’t just be on the defense, but go on the offense. I will conclude with this illustration. When I was in the tenth grade I took driver’s education. You had to take driver’s ed before you could get your license. One of my football coaches was the driver’s ed teacher. His name was Coach Roper. In this class he would always drive this home and this was constantly in the class, in the car and everywhere all six weeks of the course. He would say “You have to be a defensive driver. Be a defensive driver.” That’s why Psalm 1 says “Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, does not, does not, does not...” Put off. You have to have a

good defense. To have a good defense don't allow false teachers and false teaching. Be alert. They creep in.

Then I had a basketball coach who tolerated me and it wasn't because I could play basketball. I remember when the Boston Celtics had won a game and when the coach knew they had won the game he would light up a cigar. At my high school the way that you knew we were winning the game is when they let me go in the game. That was how you knew our game was won. I'll never forget that the basketball coaches would always say "The best defense is a good offense." Get on the offense.

Do you want to spot the counterfeit? Then you need to know the Real Thing. Do you want to spot false teachers? Then get good teachers. Do you want spot false teaching? Then get good teaching. So you want to get on the offense and that's why after Jude gives all the warnings he then says "But you beloved contend for the faith. You hold fast. You proclaim. You teach that which is true and right." That is what this very dear epistle that we've only scratched the surface on has to say to us. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You so much for the privilege we have to know that Christ has established a true Gospel and the warning we have that Satan desires for us to hold to a false gospel, the gospel of libertinism or the gospel of legalism. We want to hold fast to the true Gospel that we're saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone yet faith and grace for those who are in Christ is never alone for it always brings a changed life. It's not our changed life that saves us but our changed life displays our Savior. If any man be in Christ he is a new creation. Father, help us stay on the highway, in the river, in the channel markers and not go into the ditches or get mired in the banks of legalism or licentiousness. Help us to be aware of these errors and then Father, expose them because we know, proclaim and live the truth. Father, finally we're in desperate need of Biblically accurate, diligent, faithful teachers so that there is no vacuum for these false teachers. Please keep our seminaries focused. Bless Birmingham Theological Seminary. Help us to stay focused, in Jesus' Name, Amen.