

# **Creepy Teachers, Sneaky Libertines, and our Glorious God**

## **A Study of the Epistle of Jude**

(C. Yvonne Karl)

### **WHO IS JUDE?**

<sup>1a</sup> *Jude, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James.* According to his own words, he was first and foremost a bondservant of the Lord Jesus Christ; that is, he was totally dedicated and committed to giving Jesus Christ 100% of his allegiance and service—a true minister of the Lord. He also says he is the brother of James. This would make him a physical half-brother of Jesus as we read in Matthew 13:55 and Mark 6:3: Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary, and His brothers, James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? [Judas and Jude are variations on the spelling of the same Greek Word.] Which James would all of the Christians of that time know about? None other than Pastor James of the Church in Jerusalem (Acts 15).

### **TO WHOM DOES JUDE WRITE?**

<sup>1b</sup> *To those who are called, sanctified (made holy) by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ.* Jude does not identify the recipients of his letter with a specific geographic label, but he does call them beloved so we assume that he planned to circulate this letter to believers he knew well in many places. He describes these beloved in three ways: (1) They are called; (2) They are sanctified (made holy) by God; and (3) They are preserved in Jesus Christ.

1. *To those who are called (kleteois).* Jesus gave the great invitation: Come unto me all you who are weary and heavily burdened and I will give you rest (Matt. 11:28). God calls people by the power of the Holy Spirit to come to Him. It is up to the individual to answer the call. You can call me on the telephone but if I don't answer, your call is to no avail. The people to whom Jude writes have answered the call!

2. *They are sanctified (made holy-hagios) by God.* Because they have accepted the call, repented of their sins, and changed their lifestyle to obey the Lord Jesus Christ, God has set them apart from the world. Their desire is now to follow Jesus rather than their senses, their possessions, and their culture.

3. *They are preserved (teteremenois) in Jesus Christ.* Jesus abides in them and they abide in Him. He keeps them in perfect peace because their minds are fixed on Him (Is. 26:3). He guides them, strengthens them, comforts them, assures them. Those who accept the call to believe in Christ, and having believed were set apart from the world, now continue unshaken in their Christian faith.

Jude specifically weeds out all periphery people. He is writing to those who have genuinely experienced a new birth by the Spirit of God and are quite serious about living a holy, godly life—this was no time to be sitting on the fence of indecision and to be swayed by false teaching. External spiritual displays may or may not reflect the inner spiritual condition of a person. Devotedness to Jesus Christ is characterized by thoughts, words and deeds in believers from whom emanates the holy presence of the Lord. Jesus said you will know His disciples by the love they have for one another, and by their fruit, and by the way they continue in the Word—not by their gifts or public personalities (Matt. 7:16,20; John 13:35; 8:31).

### **WHY DOES JUDE WRITE?**

<sup>2</sup>*Mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you.* <sup>3</sup>*Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.*

1. Jude wanted to remind the believers of the mercy, peace, and love that were so evident in the salvation experience. In fact, all of the writers of epistles in the New Testament talked about mercy, peace, and love: the cardinal principles of salvation. God's grace covers all of our life—it is His undeserved and

unmerited favor and blessing. While we were yet sinners He died for us! (Rom. 5:8). God's mercy infiltrates every aspect of our being. When we ask for forgiveness, He grants it rather than make us suffer final punishment. According to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost (Titus 3:5). Peace is the conscious absence of "nagging" at your mind and emotions. Peace, I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world gives give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled; neither let it be afraid (John 14:27).

2. It appears that at first Jude wanted to write to encourage believers about how the gospel of salvation impacted the lives of people from every nation—both Jew and Gentile. He may have planned to share more testimonies about Jesus' life before and after the resurrection, about His ascension, and the coming of the Holy Spirit. However, he had heard the news about false teachers who were traveling from church to church preaching a stirring message. This pierced his heart for when people are really hungry to know more about God they often fall for easy-isms dreams, visions, prophecies, and emotional outbursts and substitute them for the true life in Christ Jesus. Though some of these may be the results of an intimate relationship with the Lord, others are pure public display, flattery, and demagoguery—making false claims and promises to get power.

3. The whole thrust of his letter then turns to exposing the false teachers and their false doctrines and instructing the believers to remain faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ and not get carried off into error. How apropos this teaching is for believers today. We have the same problems now they had then: people who come up with some "off the wall" teaching and demonstration of power so they will be unique and draw an audience (and probably an offering).

#### **WHO ARE THESE FALSE TEACHERS and WHAT ARE THEIR FALSE DOCTRINES?**

<sup>4</sup>*For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.*

<sup>5</sup>*But I want to remind you, though you once knew this, that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe.* <sup>6</sup>*And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day;* <sup>7</sup>*as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.*

1. They creep into the church secretly.
2. They are singled out for judgment.
3. They are ungodly.
4. They are licentious (lack restraint)-do whatever they "feel" like doing.
5. They deny the Lord God—if not in words certainly by their actions and attitudes.
7. They are sure to be judged with others of like mind and behavior that we read about in the Old Testament.

When they first arrive, you do not detect their motives. They profess love, promise cooperation, and begin to render service. They win friends to themselves. They participate in all aspects of the church life. They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate (Titus 1:16). For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple (Romans 16:18). For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for satan himself is transformed into an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:13-15). Jude immediately relates these "creepy teachers" to the disobedient Israelites, the unfaithful angels, and the impure inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah. He says they are ordained to judgment, ungodly, licentious (lack restraint), deny the Lord God, and are sure to be judged. So be on the look out. Don't get sucked into the enticing words of these false teachers.

We see this today as “sneaky libertines” come into the fellowship of the church with their doctrine of freedom. They condemn believers who hold to scriptural principles of godliness and purity and teach that grace has freed them from the necessity of adhering to boundaries. They practice fornication, adultery, and/or homosexuality and flaunt it under the guise of being “free.” Whole congregations have been taken captive by these “libertines” and persuaded to do such things as perform homosexual marriages and ordain homosexual ministers—all because they do not understand that homosexuality is not a lifestyle but a sin (Rom. 1:1-32). Since it is a sin, there is hope! There is forgiveness for sin and “old things pass away and all things become new” in Christ Jesus. However, there is also punishment for sin when no repentance is present and no change of lifestyle exists (Rom. 1:18). Do not be deceived; God is not mocked. Whatever one sows, that he will reap. (Gal. 6:7).

*<sup>8</sup>Likewise also these dreamers defile the flesh, reject authority, and speak evil of dignitaries. <sup>9</sup>Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, “The Lord rebuke you!” <sup>10</sup>But these speak evil of whatever they do not know; and whatever they know naturally, like brute beasts, in these things they corrupt themselves. <sup>11</sup>Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit, and perished in the rebellion of Korah.*

8. They are filthy dreamers
9. They despise authority over them.
10. They scoff at spiritual beings.
11. They are like Cain.
12. They are like Balaam.
13. They are like Korah.

They defile their bodies by allowing unclean and impure thoughts in their minds. They may view pornographic videos, movies, or magazines, and pursue their fleshly lusts by involving themselves in adulterous affairs. They scoff at the idea of being subordinate to anyone in leadership and often win a following by telling other Christians about their dreams and visions—real or made-up—in order to gain a position of superiority with them. But, Jude says, they have no understanding of spiritual beings such as angels and satan, or how to deal with them. They simply speak against what they don’t know anything about, and they follow their senses and do as they please. In so doing, they go the way of Cain (supposing that God should accept whatever he brought as an offering rather than bringing what God required-Gen.4); they make the same mistake Balaam did (expecting to profit from his prophecy-Num.22-24,31), and they will perish just like Korah and company did (when they rebelled against the leadership of Moses—God’s chosen man-Num.16). They profess they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate (Titus 1:16).

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*<sup>12</sup> These are spots in your love feasts, while they feast with you without fear, serving only themselves. They are clouds without water, carried about by the winds; late autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, pulled up by the roots; <sup>13</sup>raging waves of the sea, foaming up their own shame; wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever. <sup>14</sup>Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, “Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, <sup>15</sup>to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.”*

14. The produce spiritual acne at fellowship dinners.
15. They are empty and unstable.
16. They teach things that are shameful.
17. They disappear just as quickly as a shooting star.
18. They will be judged by the Lord Himself.

While they move among the believers they think only of themselves and what they might gain from these relationships. On the outside they look elegant and rich, but on the inside they are empty and poor. They have no spiritual fruit because they are spiritually dead. They are like a shooting star: Now you see them,

now you don't. They pop up bright and exciting and die out—leaving only darkness. The light and rewards promised by these false teachers don't materialize. People in their clutches have moments of seemingly supernatural experiences, but when the moment has passed they have nothing secure on which to anchor their lives. Jude apparently quotes from a hand-me-down familiar to the people of his time to let them know what would happen to these teachers: they will be judged for misleading the people. Either they will respond to the conviction of the Holy Spirit and repent and confess their sins, or they will be eternally separated from God. Jesus said, Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, you that work iniquity (Matt. 7:22-23).

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<sup>16</sup> *These are grumblers, complainers, walking according to their own lusts; and they mouth great swelling words, flattering people to gain advantage.*

19. They are murmurers.

20. They are not content.

These false teachers will gather a "concerned" group around them and share about how others are not spiritual enough. They tell how they have "discerned" things that are wrong with those in leadership and what should be changed. (Kenneth Hagin once said, "They don't have the gift of discerning the spirits, but the gift of criticism!") They are dissatisfied with their jobs and positions—both in the church and in the world. Nothing is ever quite enough for them—not the power or recognition given them, not the spiritual authority ascribed to them, nor the rewards that come to them in the form of praise, promotion, or finances. They continually seek for more money—notoriety, power, money.

21. They do whatever they "feel" like doing.

They continue to walk after their own lusts and passions and change the teachings of Jesus to fit their lifestyle. You've seen it happen often: the minister who appears to be so "anointed" and have a super spiritual life, falls flat on his face because of illegal maneuvering in finances or adultery.

22. They use showy words.

23. They flatter people for personal gain.

These false teachers flatter people, or give them false hopes for reward. Sometimes they do this in the form of "prophecy", puffing up believers to make them think they have certain gifts and abilities that are not yet manifested. Sometimes they say "while we were praying, the Lord spoke to me..." thus and so, and begin to share how the leaders are off base and they are the ones with the real vision for the church. They are showy and performance oriented to get a following. This is personal gain for them—in terms of a following, spiritual authority, and perhaps even a monetary income.

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<sup>20</sup> *But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit,* <sup>21</sup>*keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.* <sup>22</sup>*And on some have compassion, making a distinction;* <sup>23</sup>*but others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh...*

## **WHAT IS TO BE THE BELIEVERS' RESPONSE TO THESE FALSE TEACHERS AND THEIR TEACHING?**

1. Believers must not be caught off guard but remember there will always be mockers, scoffers, false teachers among us—yes, even in our churches. They should not become suspicious of everyone, nor paranoid about new people coming in. Rather they must reach out in love and forgiveness making sure that they themselves are rooted and grounded in Christ Jesus.

2. Believers must build up themselves on their holy faith by praying in the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the giver of gifts that will assist the believers in discerning the spirits of all teachers among them. This is so important because we know that there are "real" Christians who are godly in word, deed, and motive. When they speak, they are not demanding, self-promoting, or proud. They have the whole congregation in

mind and heart and desire only good to come to all concerned. Believers must read and study the Word of God so they can apply it to any and all of the new teachers and teachings they hear.

3. Believers must keep themselves in the love of God. The love of God does not hate; it does not persecute; it does not manipulate; it does not deceive. When a believer keeps himself in the love of God—it is with a tender heart and a desire to forgive. He has no desire to fight or win—his only desire is to allow God to love people through him so they may come to maturity in Christ Jesus.

4. Believers must be compassionate and understanding in helping those people who are caught up in the false teaching but are sincerely desiring to be followers of Jesus Christ. They come alongside them and pull them out of the “false” and gently instruct them from the Word of God about the real. If they refuse to line up with the word of God, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the teaching which you have learned and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple (Rom. 16:18).

5. Believers must stay close to the Lord, alert to His Word, and always remember: do not believe every spirit but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world (1 John 4:1). The fact that many “false” prophets are around automatically suggests that there are also many “real” prophets.

### **THE BLESSING**

<sup>24</sup> Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, And to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, <sup>25</sup>To God our Savior, Who alone is wise, Be glory and majesty, Dominion and power, Both now and forever. Amen.

1. God is able to keep you from falling/stumbling. He is ABLE, but you have to stay close enough to Him that He can whisper in your ear where to step and where not to step; so that He is holding your hand on slippery slopes. When He lives in you by the power of the Holy Spirit, He teaches, guides, equips, convicts, warns...and in many other ways keeps you from stumbling and falling into the pit of despair, discouragement, and deceit.

2. God is able to present you faultless—spotless and pure. He is ABLE, but you have to come to Him in repentance and ask forgiveness when you fall short of His expectations. He forgives. He washes you clean— removes every spot, wrinkle, and blemish so you will be presentable before the throne of God. He does this with exceeding joy. He celebrates His precious saints who have been faithful to the end.

3. God, our Savior, is the only wise God. How do I know He’s the one and only wise God? He’s the Father of my Lord Jesus Christ—His only begotten Son. The rest of us who are His sons are adopted into the family of God. Ah how great is His wisdom that He could take the mess we make of things and change it, turning it into glorious praise to Himself! He alone, through His Son Jesus Christ, can bring salvation to men and women in this world so full of sickness and disease, trouble and stress, murder and death.

Now it’s time for a joyful praise service. How can we sit still and be sad and frustrated about false teaching and false teachers when we have such an awesome God! He equips us to deal with every situation in life. He’s there with us. We simply deal with the situations and move on—no regrets, no injuries, no hard feelings, no bitterness—because The Teacher, The Comforter, abides in us.

4. To God be Glory—honor, praise, worship—both now and forevermore.

5. To God be Glory Majesty—excellence, greatness, beauty—both now and forevermore.

6. To God be Glory Dominion—rule, lordship—both now and forevermore.

7. To God be Glory Power—privilege, authority—both now and forevermore.

AMEN! (Which here means steadfast, unchanging is He!). Amen and Amen.