

Synthetic Bible Studies

Containing an outline study of every book of the Bible
with suggestions for Sermons, Addresses and
Bible Expositions

By

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LESSON TWENTY-FIVE

JUDE

The writer of the Epistle of Jude was evidently not an apostle; he calls himself a "**servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James.**" Which James? There were two whose brother he might have been, the son of Alphaeus and the brother of our Lord. It would be profitless to speculate on this question here, enough to say that the general opinion is in favor of the last named relationship.

1. The first division of the Epistle, as usual, is the salutation (v. 1, 2).

- in what terms are the believers addressed?

Notice the verse: "**them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called.**" How comforting all this is! They who are called of GOD are beloved in GOD the Father and kept for JESUS CHRIST. Why kept for Him? How much this suggests as to His coming manifested glory and the part believers will take in it?

2. The object of the Epistle follows (vv. 3, 4).

- what is that object as stated in verse 3?

- to what did he find it necessary to exhort them to whom he wrote? Notice that the faith delivered to the saints was delivered "once" - once for all.

The word "faith" here is to be taken in the sense of that body of Christian doctrine which forms the sum and substance of the truth concerning "**our common salvation.**"

It is used synonymously with the word "Gospel." This was delivered to the saints, to the body of the church, at the beginning of its history as a complete revelation in itself (Revelation 22:18, 19). It is a sacred deposit not only to be preserved in its integrity, but to be defended and earnestly contended for.

The necessity for this defense is seen in the substance of verse 4. The word "foreshadowed" in that verse speaks of being "forewritten," i. e., the false teachers therein referred to had been predicted as coming in among the flock. Our Lord had spoken of them, and so had all His apostles. The nature and outcome of their teaching as suggested by that word "lasciviousness" are particularly noticeable.

3. The third division of the Epistle deals in detail with the subject of these false teachers (vv. 5-16).

We have first, a revelation of their condemnation or punishment (vv. 5-7), from which their position as professed disciples would not save them any more than it saved the Israelites who were brought out of Egypt, when they afterwards sinned against light (v. 5); or the angels referred to previously in Peter's Epistles and Genesis (v. 6); or Sodom and Gomorrah (v. 7). Do not fail to observe the special class of sins prominent in these instances, especially the two last named, and their relationship to that word "lasciviousness" already spoken of. While the erroneous teachings of these false teachers were intellectual, of course, yet their power was terribly augmented by association with carnality of the grossest kind.

The description of these false teachers is followed by a declaration of the punishment coming upon them (w. 8-13).

Observe in verse 8 that they not only defile the flesh but speak evil of dignitaries, by which may be meant both civil and ecclesiastical superiors. And in this connection there is a strange illustration used in verse 9, that throws a good deal of light on the mystery of the death and burial of Moses as recorded in Deuteronomy.

- why that mystery?
- why should GOD Himself have buried the body of Moses, and kept the burial place a secret?
- why should Satan have desired possession of that body?
- did his foreknowledge of what should take place on the Mount of Transfiguration have aught to do with it?

And shall we say with some, that Moses in the flesh is to be one of the two witnesses named in Revelation 11, and did Satan seek thus to frustrate GOD's purposes concerning the last days? And then the contention of Michael, how that brings to mind the teaching in Daniel concerning his particular relationship as the prince that stands for Israel. What a bearing all this has on the teachings of the New Testament about the dominions, and principalities and powers of the air (Ephesians 6).

It may be asked, Where did Jude obtain this information about the conflict between Michael and Satan? Of course, the answer is very simple, that he obtained it by inspiration of GOD; but is it not remarkable that it is spoken of nowhere else in the Scriptures? He refers to it as though it were a matter of tradition among the Jews, and a reference to it is found in their books; but the tradition must have had a source, and we can hardly believe an inspired writer would thus employ it if that source were not divine.

Further analysis of the character of these teachers is afforded in verse 11.

- with what three Old Testament individuals, each conspicuous for his self-willed and rebellious spirit, are they compared?

How strange it would seem that such persons could have any standing in the Christian church were it not that we discover their successors among us at the present day! "**Spots in your feasts of charity,**" are to be pictured as hidden rocks in the love-feasts. These "love feasts" were the Christian gatherings on the first day of the week for the "breaking of bread," and the presence of such would be leaders and teachers in those assemblies suggested the perils of the hidden rocks to the mariners on the broad seas.

What exceeding care and circumspection were required to avoid disastrous contact with them. It is characteristic always of the heretical teacher that he is thinking of himself rather than the flock. "There is a rough, incisive earnestness, and yet a majesty and eloquence" in all the language the inspired writer uses here, for the probable meaning of which, however, it will be necessary to consult a commentary.

The description of these false teachers is followed by a reference to the foreknowledge of them. And here is a quotation from Enoch in verse 14, on which we might say a word. Where are these words of Enoch found? There is an apocryphal book in which they are found, but its author probably quoted from our Epistle. Doubtless their real source should be spoken of in the same way as that of the reference to Michael and the body of Moses already mentioned. How deeply interesting to learn that Enoch, away back there before the deluge, had his mind carried out in the Spirit to the day of the second coming of CHRIST! And how perfectly his words agree with those of all the later prophets down to the very last, concerning the details and the purposes of that momentous event!

Every reader of this Epistle must have had his attention arrested by the fact that this whole passage, indeed from verse 3 to verse 13, is very similar to one found in II Peter 2:1-19.

Does it not look as though one of these inspired writers saw and used the text of the other? And would this destroy the feature of inspiration in either case? Certainly not, any more than it would destroy the same in the case of Moses, to learn that he had obtained his data for the book of Genesis from tradition or earlier written sources. Inspiration is as truly needed, and may be as truly exercised in the selection and use of such material as in that which is original in the most absolute sense. Some who have carefully examined the two passages have reached the conclusion that Jude is the earlier writer of the two and that Peter is the copyist. And yet Peter is using the words with a somewhat different object from that of Jude, and is changing and abridging them a little to suit that object. Let the two passages be read side by side and these

distinctions will scarcely need to be pointed out.

4. The detailed reference to the false teachers or ungodly leaders in the church closes with verse 16, and gives way to the fourth general division of the Epistle, which contains a description of the true church or true believers in sharp contrast with the false (vv. 17-25).

It begins with a caution (vv. 17-19).

- to which of the apostles in particular is he here referring, do you think?
- how does he describe these ungodly persons who have found their way into the visible church?

That word "sensual" means "*natural*" or "*animal*." It is simply a case of unregenerated Christians of whom the church is still also plentifully supplied.

The caution is followed by an exhortation (vv. 20, 21).

- "Build,"
- "pray,"
- "keep,"
- "look."

Here are the four corner posts defining the possessions of the Christian life.

- does the exhortation to build suggest similar instruction from any apostle recently studied?
- what is peculiar about the exhortation to pray in this case?

In Romans 8 we have revealed the inspiring truth that the HOLY SPIRIT prays in us, but here we are to pray in Him. Are these contradictory teachings?

- is it not true that the HOLY SPIRIT is our inner life, and that He is also our spiritual atmosphere?
- in what are we to keep ourselves according to this exhortation?
- does this mean that we are to keep ourselves in GOD's love to us or in our love to Him?
- how better can we keep ourselves both in the experience of His love to us, and the conscious emotion of our love to Him than by building ourselves up on our most holy faith, and praying in the HOLY SPIRIT?
- what do you suppose is meant by "**looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.**"
- in the light of all the previous teaching about the appearing of His glory, may it not refer to that?

The exhortation is followed by instruction, and instruction especially concerning soul-winning (vv. 22, 23). The Greek text here, especially in verse 23, is somewhat obscure, but the teaching in any event calls for compassion on our part, and an effort to save the sinner while hating the sin.

The benediction and ascription follow, concluding the Epistle in language as well known to, and

appreciated by the whole church as any in the New Testament. What two great things is GOD able to do for believers in His Son? No wonder, therefore, that we should ascribe unto Him through JESUS CHRIST "**glory and majesty, dominion and power throughout all ages.**"

~ end of Lesson 25 ~
