

## Jude – Fellowship Group Notes – 11/12 June

We may think we don't need to worry too much about false teaching nowadays or here in our own church. However, it's easy to "welcome heresy in the name of tolerance" (D.A. Carson). Jude concisely and powerfully warns us against it. He also encourages and warms us with simple yet profound lessons about our perseverance as Christians which he paints against the backdrop of false teachers. Jude is probably a book we don't read often, because on the most part we probably don't want to. On the whole it's negative, pretty harsh and almost brutal in its reading. But it's a bit of forceful, negative teaching we need to hear, and it's a bit of profound truth that can warm our hearts and minds to Christ.

*(Note for those leading the fellowship group study: First, this study is longer in written length but that doesn't mean it should be longer in time. Jude takes some explaining! Jude uses complex illustrations; do tease out the principle he teaches but try to avoid getting too bogged down in each illustration, these may be focussed on in more depth when we study 2 Peter 2 later on. (2 Peter 2 is almost exactly the same text as Jude but goes into both more and less detail in places. It's thought that 2 Peter 2 is based on Jude). I'd suggest you spend the most time on v3-4 and 20-25 as v5-19 are in more depth in 2 Peter 2).*

Major themes: 1. Warning of false teachers (v1-19). 2. Exhortation of how to avoid false teaching and save others from it (20-23). 3. The perseverance of the saints (v1,20-21,24-25).

### **1. Warning of false teachers – v3-19**

#### **v3,4 – general lessons about false teaching**

- What does Jude mean by 'the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints'? What's that in reference to? A few decades ago it was differences of doctrinal belief that divided people. How's it changed today?
  - In evangelical circles today we're often divided by more cultural tastes, preferences for particular speakers, church 'styles', or preferences for particular evangelistic courses than we are divided and identified by differences in doctrinal beliefs. With this in mind how does/can our lack of doctrinal knowledge and doctrinal differences set us in bad footing to recognise false, heretical teaching?
- Do we contend for the faith today against false teachers? We often think that false teaching is done by *other* people at *other* churches. What does Jude remind us of here? (v4) How can we welcome heresy in the name of tolerance?
- Jude uses lots of clever 'triplets' throughout his letter. What does this triplet in v4 teach us about how to recognise false teachers? We will come back to this verse later.

#### **3-4 – Creed of the false teachers and the ultimate danger of false teaching; for those who teach it and for those who hear and believe it**

- It's difficult to tell what exactly the false teachers were teaching but it's easy to see the general 'creed' that they had from how Jude describes them in v4 and the illustrations he uses later. We'll look at the 'change the grace of our God into a licence for immorality' later on.
- Who do these false teachers deny?
  - Why is this the ultimate danger of false teaching for both those who teach and those who hear and believe it? Think about the 'prosperity gospel', why is it so bad?
    - *They are being denied the only person who can save and satisfy them.* The prosperity gospel, is not bad simply because it's wrong. It's bad because it's *not prosperous enough*. Christ is the ultimate treasure, *Christ is best!* And the prosperity gospel denies people the greatest, all saving, all satisfying treasure they could possibly have. False teaching like the prosperity gospel always goes along these lines; 'sure, Christ is good, but you need something more to have a truly satisfying, truly holy life' (see Colossians for this example). False teaching does this; it takes a cheap car like a Lada, wraps it up in a Ferrari body shell and sells it using clever sales speech. The customer is enticed in, but in the long run it doesn't satisfy. It doesn't satisfy because it's not the real thing. Only Christ satisfies. Only in Christ can we say in the face of any challenge that we are 'sorrowful, yet always rejoicing' (2 Corinth 6:10).

#### **5-19 – Conduct and destiny and character of false teachers**

- What is the meaning and principle raised by each of these 3 Old Testament examples given in v5-7? (For context look at Genesis 6:1-4, 19:1-29). From Jude's explanation (v8) of v5-7 what do we learn about these false teachers?
- V9 is confusing, not least because we don't have the original text from where Jude probably takes this story (this is extra-biblical material, but, it's not wrong for Jude to use it as an illustration). What principle does Jude teach us through this story? Who does Michael leave the rebuking of the devil up to? How is this in contrast to the false teachers (v8)? How can we be aware of this truth about false teachers today?
- Jude uses more OT examples. Unpack briefly each OT example and see what principle Jude is teaching through each. (For context see; Cain - Genesis 4:1-25 (especially 4:6-8), Balaam - 2 Peter 2:15-16 (the key is Balaam's desire for money), Korah - Numbers 16, 26:10-11). What do we learn about false teachers through these examples?

- What does Jude show us through the ‘nature’ illustrations? What’s life like for a shooting star? What’s the point in a fruitless tree? How are false teachers like this? *They promise, but they never deliver.* (Jeremiah 17:5-8). What is the fate of these fruitless trees? (Psalm 1:3-5).
- Jude reminds the believers that they’ve been warned already (Acts 20:29-30, 2 Corinth 11:13-15). Do we heed this same warning enough ourselves?
- To summarise using v16 and v19, what’s the character of these false teachers like? How will false teachers try to promote themselves and their teaching?
- Looking at v4 and v5-19, is it fair to say false teaching is wrong because it’s ultimately rebellion against God Himself?

### **20-23 - Exhortation of how to avoid false teaching and save others from it**

- What ways does Jude encourage us to avoid this false teaching and the fate of those who teach it?
- How does false teaching affect those who hear it? (v22) How can we help them?
- What does v23 mean? The imagery is powerful. Are we ready and willing to do this? Do we sometimes need to be sterner and more forceful than we sometimes are? (Examples: Richard Sibbes: “Sometimes a sharp reproof is a sweet balm”. When a friend of mine was very young she ran out into oncoming traffic on a road. Her Dad immediately pulled her by the arm, lifted her off her feet and landed her back on the safety of the path. In the end she was safe, but in the process her Dad dislocated her elbow).

### **2. The perseverance of the saints – v1,20,21,24,25**

- To start, briefly, what do we understand of the doctrine of ‘the perseverance of the saints’? (often termed ‘once saved, always saved’) What are our beliefs about it? In what aspects do we struggle with it? Do we in some way believe that it’s wrong? Look at 1 Corinth 1:8-9 and John 10:27-30 to get you started.
  - What’s the link between our calling and our final perseverance? (v1)
  - Jude doesn’t just talk about Christian’s perseverance, he also teaches about others who are ‘kept’. Who are they? (v6)
  - Who is it that’s ‘keeping’ us and keeping those for judgement? And why is Jude’s statement about Christ in v4 and God in v1 so integral to this doctrine? If Christ *isn’t* THE Sovereign Lord then what does it mean for His ability to keep us?
  - This doctrine raises many questions in response. Here are two common response questions. Perhaps discuss the passages, questions and notes below.
1. Does this give us a license to commit whatever sin we want because in the end we’re okay, Christ will keep us?
    - a. Look again at Jude v4. What does it mean to ‘change (or pervert) the grace of our God into a licence for immorality’? How is the first response question linked to this false teaching?
      - i. This is antinomianism or ‘license to sin because of grace’ (see Romans 6). It essentially says ‘God is a graceful, quaint, lovely Father who doesn’t care much about sin; He’s forgiven me, I’ve got my ticket to Heaven so now logically I can do whatever I want’. Look at Ephesians 1:4, 4:1. Why is this teaching of antinomianism so wrong? ‘*We’re saved, set free from sin so that we’re free to not sin, NOT!; ‘saved to be free to sin’ (antinomianism).* Yes we will persevere (v1,v24-25) but that doesn’t mean we can just sit back and do whatever we wish. That’s not the point of the Christian life; we’re saved to be *free to not sin*.
        - When this question is asked there’s a simple question to ask in response. “Have you really understood God’s grace in Christ? If you have, somewhere, in even just a small way, you should have a desire to not sin. Not a desire to see grace and think it’s a license to allow more sin. Christ saves us to be free to not sin.
  2. If Christ is the one keeping us, what part do I play? Why does Jude tell us to ‘keep yourselves in the love of God’ (v21) – doesn’t Christ do it all and we sit back and relax? Do I have any obligation to persevere? If Christ is sanctifying us to present us pure and holy, then why do I have to strive to live a holy life?
    - a. Look at Eph 5:25-27 and Philippians 1:6, 2:12-13. In what way did/does Christ work *for* us and then *in* us? Looking especially to the Philippians verses how are we *participating* in God’s work in us?
    - b. God gives us the air and the ability to breath – does this mean we can just stop breathing and we will continue to live?
    - c. John Owen: “Our duty and God’s grace are not opposed in the matter of sanctification; the one does absolutely suppose the other. Neither can we perform our duty without the grace of God; nor does God give us this grace unto any other end but that we may rightly perform our duty”.
    - d. Christ is working in us and *with* us to ensure our perseverance and sanctification
- To summarise this small study on perseverance, look at Luke 22:31-32 for a stunningly simple, beautiful and warming example of Christ’s practical action for our perseverance.

**Prayer points** – Praise that Christ is our keeper. Pray that we’d be as aware as possible of false teaching. Pray that we’d know how to fight for those who are hearing and believing false teaching.