

Little Letters Week 5

Jude

What's this about? Who's Jude?

1. Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and a brother of James,
To those who have been called, who are loved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ:
2. Mercy, peace and love be yours in abundance.

Who is Jude? Brother of James, Hang on isn't James Jesus brother??? Yep but he didn't claim that as a status symbol and says he is a servant. He recognises Jesus for who He is.

Who is the letter to? Those who are called. MM, what that. Those who recognise God's call or place in their lives, those who recognise God's love. Now there is much more to this but there isn't time to hook into it. Have a look for yourselves.

Ask some questions:

What does it mean to me to be Called?

What does it mean to be kept for Jesus?

I love verse 2.

Mercy, peace and love be yours in abundance.

Maybe when we write a letter or greet people we should say this. Maybe it can be a greeting from those at the door handing out the bulletins on Sunday morning.

Maybe we should just say it and mean it whenever.

He goes on.

3. Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt compelled to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to God's holy people.

a. Contend For Faith

This is about recognising what is right teaching and what is wrong teaching. Notice I used the term contend. We are in a contest in some ways. Modern thought process verses the truth. That gives us a couple of things to do.

A. Know what we believe

B. Know what we don't believe.

Why do we believe what we do? How do we know its truth? Think about it, evaluate it, pull it to pieces.

When something comes up- work it through, ask questions, know what it is about THEN go to scripture and theologise.

(Now, theology is a study of God – so when I say theologise, I mean work out God's position on something.)

4. For certain individuals whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.

b. Rebellion & Justice

Jude uses Old Testament and Jewish literature to demonstrate how rebellious people receive divine justice and warn against rebellious, corrupt teachers who reject God's messengers.

This really gives us a big hint as to who he was writing this letter to. People who knew and understood the Jewish Scripture – that is Jewish Christians.

His communication is contextualised to his audience. (We need to consider when we witness or explain the Jesus message where the people are coming from)

False news is nothing new. False teaching is nothing new, actually most of the false teaching we are confronted with usually has its roots in antiquity. The Old Testament shows us how old some of these things are.

5. Though you already know all this, I want to remind you that the Lord at one time delivered his people out of Egypt, but later destroyed those who did not believe.
6. And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their proper dwelling—these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day.

c. Rebellious Corruption

Old Testament examples about rebels who corrupt other people are metaphors for teachers whose self-absorption and trail of chaos betray their claim to follow Jesus within the context of the people's lives Jude is writing to. Do we then drag these examples into our own context, are about messages of Sodom and Gormorrah etc valid for todays readers. Yes. If we take the bible to be a rule for life, if the bible is our guide book, if we give the bible credibility for our personal spiritual instruction then those examples speak to us.

Listen to this:

7. In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire.
8. In the very same way, on the strength of their dreams these ungodly people pollute their own bodies, reject authority and heap abuse on celestial beings.
9. But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not himself dare to condemn him for slander but said, "The Lord rebuke you!"
10. Yet these people slander whatever they do not understand, and the very things they do understand by instinct—as irrational animals do—will destroy them.

One of the major issues in our society is understanding sexuality. There have been different concepts of sexuality even back to the old Testament – that is what Sodom and Gormorrah was all about. Read the text sometime.

Notice what v 8 states:

In the very same way, on the strength of their dreams these ungodly people pollute their own bodies, reject authority and heap abuse on celestial beings.

Yep that sounds like right now. And the issue is thousands of years old. God separated His people from those activities.

Now God didn't isolate the people. He had them still living in the middle of the nations around, but God put boundaries around His people called scripture. The Laws of the first 5 books of the bible and the commands like the 10 commandments.

Want to know what God thinks about all these issues? Look at the Bible?

d. Warnings

Jude gives the church ancient warnings to deal with corrupt teachers. They distort Jesus' good news, but God's justice on evil is coming.

11. Woe to them! They have taken the way of Cain; they have rushed for profit into Balaam's error; they have been destroyed in Korah's rebellion.
12. These people are blemishes at your love feasts, eating with you without the slightest qualm—shepherds who feed only themselves. They are clouds without rain, blown along by the wind; autumn trees, without fruit and uprooted—twice dead.
13. They are wild waves of the sea, foaming up their shame; wandering stars, for whom blackest darkness has been reserved forever.

Warnings:

Look at the language,

Blemishes, feed themselves, wild, shame, blackest darkness.

They are out for themselves and they will get what they deserve.

But hang on, he mentions love feasts – that's one way of saying communion. So some of these are people are IN the church. Verse 12-13 are horrible. It is talking about selfish, opinionated people in the church, either the church fellowship or church structure. (Note: The church here is definitely the people of God not a building)

We need to know what we believe to be able to make sure these people don't take our attention away from truth.

Look at this next bit.

14. Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about them: "See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones
15. to judge everyone, and to convict all of them of all the ungodly acts they have committed in their ungodliness, and of all the defiant words ungodly sinners have spoken against him."

God is going to judge!!!

AND the judgement statement is straight after the statement on the rebellious ones being part of the church. Yep, church people will be judged too!!

And the description goes further. Again see the terminology

16. These people are grumblers and faultfinders; they follow their own evil desires; they boast about themselves and flatter others for their own advantage.
17. But, dear friends, remember what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ foretold.
18. They said to you, "In the last times there will be scoffers who will follow their own ungodly desires."
19. These are the people who divide you, who follow mere natural instincts and do not have the Spirit.

Grumblers, faultfinders, evil desires, boasters, flatterers, scoffers, dividers, not Spirit lead. Notice the warning gives us tools to work with. We look for people doing these things. If we find people are doing these things we need to question what are their motives. If it is inside the church we need to ask why are they doing this?

The author, Jude, takes 19 verses of bad stuff to get to this next bit and I love it.

e. Build something new

The book of Jude reminds believers in God's new structure to build faithfully on Jesus' message, pray, love, obey and stay alert for His return.

Look at this

20. But you, dear friends, by building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit,

21. keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.

Don't you love it!

Keep building.

How

Praying in the Holy Spirit.

And

Keeping yourselves in God's love.

That's our template. If you want, that's what we need to implant into our church vision.

Ok we get the warnings, then we get a way to deal with it.

Notice the connections.

Prayer – connection to the Spirit

Keeping in God's love – That's practical obedience.

And the practicality continues:

We talked about what to teach when we looked at the book of Titus. If we utilise that in how we interact with false teaching we have more than a starting place.

Look what Jude says here:

22. Be merciful to those who doubt;

23. save others by snatching them from the fire; to others show mercy, mixed with fear—hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh.

Be merciful – IN other words don't cut them off, don't kick them out – teach them.

Notice the next bit too –

Save others. Work with them and on them

But notice this little bit.

Hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh. – IN other words work with or work on the corrupt ones. Teach those who do have wrong ideas. We are not to isolate ourselves and become like monks on a hillside monastery. We interact, even if we don't like it.

Then there is this beautiful finish. We call it a doxology.

Doxa -glory

Logo – word

A doxology then is a glory word.

24. To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy—

25. to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.

Be careful though, to not just put this in the beautiful words category and not look at what it says.

And there is a some homework for you.

What's it say?

To Him who is able to keep us from stumbling – That's God and it describes something in context here. He can keep us from being affected by the wrong teachers.

It says to

Present you before His presence without fault. – That's the salvation and sanctification process. We are saved and being made pure by what HE did.

To the only God, our saviour – This is a claiming – This is our God we are talking about.

Then we are to give Him Glory, majesty, power, authority – He has it but we are to give credit to Him for having it.

And all this is through Jesus Christ. Jesus did all this!!

And it goes on for ever.