

## Littlebourne 4<sup>th</sup> August 2024 – Jude 1-7 - PH

<sup>1</sup> *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:* <sup>2</sup> *Mercy, peace and love be yours in abundance.* <sup>3</sup> *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.* <sup>4</sup> *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 licence for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.* <sup>5</sup> *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.* <sup>6</sup> *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.* <sup>7</sup> *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.*

This letter is effectively a sermon in itself, but we're going to break to down into four sections because it contains things which might well have been common knowledge among the Jews who read it but isn't common knowledge among the Gentile nor many of us.

*Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and a brother of James...* It starts establishing who Jude is: he's **the half brother of Jesus and brother of James**. His parents were Joseph and Mary. He's called Jude in English versions of the Bible to avoid being confused with the two disciples of Jesus - Judas Iscariot and Judas son of James, who was also called Thaddeus. In the Greek his name is Judas. He calls himself **a servant of Jesus Christ**. Again, the Greek word is **doulos**, which means slave or bondservant. We've seen this before when we looked at Acts. The NIV sometimes tries to give the sense of things when it really should stick to the text. The Dutch Bible calls this the letter of Judas. The King James called it the Epistle of Jude and calls him a servant of Jesus Christ - that seems to have stayed with most English translators. There is a vast difference between being a bondservant or slave and just a servant – a civil servant is by no means servile nor often that civil, and cannot be said to wholly and completely submitted to doing the will of his master... we've all seen "Yes Minister" to know there are servants and servants! Jude like his brother James was in the early church in Jerusalem. He is supposed to have gone out to Syria, Mesopotamia, and Persia, where this letter was written. He is believed to have died in Armenia according to Eastern Orthodox Christians after being pierced with arrows while on a cross. He is supposed by Western Catholic Christians to have died in Persia. His bones (or some of them) are in St Peter's in Rome. What we notice is that rather than saying he is the half-brother of Jesus who is God, he humbly says is a bondservant of Jesus. The blood relationship with Jesus was less important than the blood on the cross that bound him to Christ. James was the first bishop of Jerusalem and was stoned to death on the order of the high priest Ananus, (an insolent bad tempered man who led a revolt in AD 68 and was killed in a Jewish civil war – one lot of rebels fighting another lot causing disorder that led to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD70 by the Romans). James the half-brother of Jesus was martyred in around AD 63.

*... to those who have been called, who are loved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ.* Next, he names the people to whom the letter is addressed. Christians are called from sin to life, they are sanctified being made holy through the loving forgiveness of Jesus, and they are preserved from hell and protected for the sake of Jesus. Christians have answered the call of Jesus and have opened the door when they heard the knock of Jesus, who has entered in so that the Holy Spirit is dwelling in us.

<sup>2</sup> *Mercy, peace and love be yours in abundance* The Greek says, "mercy to you, peace and love may it be multiplied". Jude wants more than the usual greetings of grace, love, peace and mercy – he adds "may it be multiplied to you". There needs to be an increase in the knowledge, love, and peace as every Christian grows and matures. We should be eagerly seeking the spiritual gifts and seeking to grow deeper and closer to Jesus.

<sup>3</sup> *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.* Jude is writing to converted Jews and Gentiles and was going to write about common salvation... giving the Gospel and explaining that all believers are brothers together under Christ. But he is compelled to address issues that have arisen in the church that need attention. He urges them to keep hold of the faith they know to be true, sharing it boldly, and to strengthen the bonds that bind all Christians together.

<sup>4</sup> *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 licence for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.*

Even at this early stage, there were people in church who aren't Christians and who behave badly. Jude says they crept in unnoticed and are those who would continue to do as they please claiming they can always be forgiven. This cheap grace attitude is not unknown in the church today, where sinful behaviour is excused because of a supposed right that Jesus will always forgive sinners. Spurgeon wrote "Satan knows right well that one devil in the church can do far more than a thousand devils outside her bounds." A common sign of ungodliness is preferring to please people over pleasing God. This may take the form of treating certain people with wealth differently from those who are poor, or tolerating sinful behaviour without reproof, and so allowing the sheep in the flock to believe that that sinful behaviour is not ungodly. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and men without fear of the holy righteous judgment of God who boldly do what they like believing they are still Christians can infect the church and convince the weaker brethren to do likewise. Satan's first question to Eve was "did God really say that?" and today there are some who ask the same question when faced with having to stop doing what God says they should stop doing. Remember that the Greek world was full of immorality – double standards of behaviour were rife... not getting found out was the aim for all those who enjoyed licentious behaviour, so that what was kept behind closed doors and outside the public domain was tolerated. Pretty much what the world is like today. Jude says that this behaviour denies Jesus as it makes him the forgiver of every kind of sin without the need for real repentance and turning away from sin.

<sup>5</sup> *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.* Jude assumes that people knew the Old Testament. Can we assume all of us know the Bible and behave accordingly? It would seem to be apparent given the divisions in the church today that many in authority as well as many in the laity only believe the bits they like and ignore the bits they don't like. It is even worse for those who once knew the reality of the love of God but now prefer to go their own way and no longer love Jesus as they did formerly. In Egypt the people who saw the might of God with the plagues. Then escaping they saw God as the pillar of smoke by day and fire by night, they saw the Red Sea divide and the Egyptian army drowned. They saw water from the rock when they were thirsty. They received manna day in day out. But they also believed the promised land of milk and honey was unattainable because of false reports. Joshua and Caleb gave true reports but the naysayers and cowards who no longer believed God could crush every enemy were believed. Today people think they know better than God what is achievable and what is permissible because of their unbelief. What happened to people in the wilderness for forty years? Only two made it to the promised land, only two remained who had seen God's power at work... the rest died without reaching the promised land. None entered except Joshua and Caleb. There is no escaping from God's judgment.

<sup>6</sup> *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.*

In the first centuries BC and AD Jewish scholars were writing down the oral histories of the Jews. The story of the fall of Lucifer from heaven with one third of all the angels was common knowledge among the Jews and here Jude refers to this. Much comes from the Book of Enoch which along with the Apocrypha is still part of the Ethiopian Church's Bible. The wages of sin is death. The penalty for disobedience is punishment. There is no escaping from God's judgment. Genesis 6: 1-2 *When human beings began to increase in number on the earth and daughters were born to them, <sup>2</sup> the sons of God saw that the daughters of humans were beautiful, and they married any of them they chose.* The sons of God did not keep to their proper dwelling, and consumed by lust, had their wicked way with the daughters of men. Who are these "sons of God"? Here Jude says they are angels, fallen angels. The Book of Enoch calls them "The Watchers" who are above the earth seeing what men and women were doing. Jesus says in Matthew 22:30 <sup>30</sup> *At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven.* However, these beings could have relations with human women. The result was the Nephelium – the fallen ones who were the giants in the land. This unnatural union made God flood the earth, to rid it of the offspring of angels and women, as well as all but seven of the wicked descendants of Adam and Eve. Genesis 6:5-8 *The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time. <sup>6</sup> The Lord regretted that he had made human beings on the*

earth, and his heart was deeply troubled. <sup>7</sup> So the Lord said, 'I will wipe from the face of the earth the human race I have created – and with them the animals, the birds and the creatures that move along the ground – for I regret that I have made them.' <sup>8</sup> But Noah found favour in the eyes of the Lord. In a very short time Lucifer or Satan has corrupted the first man and woman and then his fallen angels went further to corrupt humanity's gene pool and sexual habits. These fallen angels are in everlasting chains which cannot be broken, and can no longer indulge themselves with women on earth. These angels were once in heaven with God, and are now in darkness, chained awaiting Judgement Day. Jude throws in "judgement on the great Day" as if that is common knowledge as well... Matthew 12:36 -37 Jesus says "<sup>36</sup> But I tell you that everyone will have to give account on the day of judgment for every empty word they have spoken. <sup>37</sup> For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.'" As I have said earlier, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowing we are to be called to account should inspire some trepidation at least, if not terror at worst. We do have Jesus able to intercede for us before the judgment seat, so that the punishment we deserve is taken on him rather than us. Our assurance of salvation through grace, mercy and forgiveness gives us peace.

<sup>7</sup> 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.

Jude goes on to reference their behaviour with what everyone then (in the first century AD) knew were the wicked ways of the townsmen of the plain Sodom and Gomorrah (five cities in all), famous for a lack of hospitality, licentiousness and homosexuality. Fire and brimstone rained down on this area and destroyed the people there. God's answer to sinful behaviour was punishment – what used to be known as "just desserts" but is now seen as questionable behaviour by many, even in the church, as unfair and excessive! Let us never insert our flawed human values of "fairness" and "justice" into what a holy, sinless, perfect God knows is fair and just. In a court of law witness statements are taken to enable the jury to decide guilt or otherwise of the accused. Thoughts of the accused, things said and acts done without witnesses are not taken into account. Not so on judgment day! Everything is taken into account! Consequently, forgiveness for everything is needed.

Next week more examples from the Old Testament of disobedience and sinfulness.