Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States

The Catholic Epistle of St. Jude

Chapter 1

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Introduction

In This Study We Will:

- Provide an overview of the Epistle's theme and purpose, author, recipients, and date
- Provide a study of Chapter 1

Introduction: the Author

- The author of this epistle is the same who is elsewhere called Judas, Luke 6:16, who was one of the twelve apostles of Christ, whose name was also Lebbaeus, and whose surname was Thaddaeus, Matthew 10:3

- "brother of James"; not the son of Zebedee, but of Alphaeus, Matthew 10:2; and this he mentions partly to distinguish himself from others of that name, as Judas Iscariot, and Judas called Barsabas; and partly for the sake of honor and credit, St. James being a very great man, a man of great note and esteem, and who seemed to be a pillar in the church

Introduction: the Author

- He was also called the brother of Jesus
- He is one of four that were called brothers of Jesus
- According to St. Jerome the brothers of Jesus were His cousins
- In the Middle-Eats tradition cousins are often called brothers
- St. Jude chose not to accentuate his physical relation to Jesus, but his spiritual one ("a bondservant of Jesus Christ," Jude 1:1; Jm 1:1)

Introduction: Recipients

- The letter is addressed "to those who are called" (Jude 1:1) without any specific designation as to who they were or where they lived
- It could apply to Jewish Christians, Gentile Christians, or both
- Their location is not indicated
- However, the references to Old Testament incidents and extra-biblical sources (Jude 1:5-7,9,11,14) strongly suggests that the original readers were Jewish Christians, perhaps living in Palestine

Introduction: Date

- Similarities between the Epistle of Jude and the Second Epistle of Peter indicate one author may have influenced the other
- St. Peter wrote of false teachers who were to come (2Pe 2:1) and St. Jude warned of those who had already "crept in unnoticed" (Jude 1:4), it is possible that St. Jude wrote after St. Peter
- St. Peter's death was during the reign of Nero (which ended in 68 A.D.)
- St. Peter's epistle was written sometime before 67 A.D.
- The lack of any mention of the destruction of Jerusalem (which occurred during the fall of 70 A.D.) suggests that St. Jude wrote before that notable event
- St. Jude's epistle may have been between 67-70 A.D.

Introduction: Them & Purpose

The Them: Contend Earnestly for the Faith

- St. Jude was very eager to write to his readers about salvation
- But the presence of ungodly men and the danger of them leading Christians astray forced him to change the purpose
- He felt that he must warn them about these false teachers
- Apparently these false teachers were trying to convince believers that being saved by grace gave them license to sin
- Their sins would no longer be held against them
- St. Jude thought it imperative that his readers be on guard against such men and be prepared to oppose their perverted teaching with the truth about God's saving grace

Introduction: Chapter Outline

- This is a very short epistle; it is only one chapter

Chapter Outline:

- Greetings (1-2)
- Purpose for writing (3-4)
- God's judgments in time past (5-7)
- Character and doom of false teachers (8-19)
- Exhortations to build their faith (20-23)
- Concluding doxology (24-25)

Greeting to the Called (1:1-2)

- St. Jude chose not to accentuate his physical relation to Jesus, but his spiritual one ("a bondservant of Jesus Christ,"
- He identified himself as the brother of James, Bishop of Jerusalem
- St. Jude writes to all believers everywhere, and not to any particular Church; hence this epistle has been called a general epistle
- All are called
- Only those who accepted and believed in Jesus Christ
- Repented and baptized in His name are sanctified

Greeting to the Called (1:1-2)

- Sanctified signifies here consecrated to God through faith in Christ
- Only when we abide in the Lord Jesus Christ we can be preserved
- St. Jude, beforehand, mentions the source and guarantee for the final accomplishment of believers' salvation; lest they should be disheartened by the dreadful evils which he proceeds to announce

Greeting to the Called (1:1-2)

- Mercy—in a time of wretchedness
- Therefore mercy stands first; the mercy of Christ (Jude 21).
- Every grace and blessing we receive it is because of His mercy
- The most needed gift is peace in this troubled world
- Love of God and the brethren is the fulfillment of the Law

Contend for the Faith (1:3-4)

- Beloved - An expression of strong affection used by the apostles when addressing their brethren, Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 4:14; 1 Corinthians 10:14; 1 Corinthians 15:58; 2 Corinthians 7:1; 2 Corinthians 12:19; Philippians 2:12; Philippians 4:1; and often elsewhere
- The common salvation - The Christian religion, and the salvation which it brings
- This is called common because it equally belongs to Jews and Gentiles; it is the saving grace of God which has appeared to every man, and equally offers to every human being that redemption which is provided for the whole world

Contend for the Faith (1:3-4)

- He had at first purposed to write to the Church at large, on the nature and design of the Gospel; but seeing the dangers to which the Churches were exposed, because of the false teachers, he changed his mind, and wrote pointedly against those false doctrines, exhorting them strenuously to contend for the faith
- That you should defend the faith with all the strength you can muster, both by true doctrine and good example of life
- Striving together for the faith of the Gospel
- Which was once given, that it may never be changed
- The saints—all Christians, holy (that is, consecrated to God) by their calling

Contend for the Faith (1:3-4)

- The apostle now gives "reason" for thus defending the truth, to wit, that there were artful and wicked men who had crept into the church, pretending to be religious teachers, but whose doctrines tended to sap the very foundations of truth
- They professed to teach the Christian religion, when in fact they denied some of its fundamental doctrines; they professed to be holy, when in fact they were living most scandalous lives
- He refers to the wrath that shall come upon the ungodly
- Whose coming was predicted and whose lives were placed under condemnation
- They asserted that the Spirit was not defiled by the sins of the body

Old and New Apostates (1:5-11)

- Outward privileges, profession, and apparent conversion, could not secure those from the vengeance of God, who turned aside in unbelief and disobedience
- The destruction of the unbelieving Israelites in the wilderness, shows that none ought to presume on their privileges
- They had miracles as their daily bread; yet even they perished in unbelief
- The mere fact of their being rescued did not prevent destruction from coming on them, so the fact that these persons seemed to be delivered from sin, and had become professed followers of God would not prevent their being destroyed if they led wicked lives

Old and New Apostates (1:5-11)

- A second case denoting that the wicked would be punished
- A great number of the angels were not pleased with the stations God allotted to them; pride was the main and direct cause or occasion of their fall
- The fallen angels are kept to the judgment of the great day; and shall fallen men escape it?
- Surely not. Consider this in due time
- The destruction of Sodom is a loud warning to all, to take heed of, and flee from fleshly lusts that war against the soul
- Utterly destroyed by fire they are an example that points to the eternal fire

Old and New Apostates (1:5-11)

- In the same way do these persons defile the flesh, or resemble the inhabitants of Sodom; that is, they practice the same kind of vices
- These men who are agitated by impure dreams
- False teachers are dreamers; they greatly defile and grievously wound the soul
- These teachers are of a disturbed mind and a seditious spirit; forgetting that the powers that be, are ordained of God, Ro 13:1
- He means to say that these false teachers and their followers were as unbelieving and disobedient as the Israelites in the wilderness, as rebellious against the authority of God as the fallen angels, and as impure and unholy as the Sodomites; and that consequently they must expect similar punishment

Old and New Apostates (1:5-11)

- Oral Tradition is an essential part of our faith
- Michael is brought forward as a contrast with those who speak evil of dignities
- The reference is not to a statement of the Bible, but to a Jewish tradition which held that the burial place of Moses was placed under the charge of Michael
- Yet in addressing the devil, a fallen angel, he did not rail at him, but only said, The Lord rebuke thee

Old and New Apostates (1:5-11)

- These false and corrupt teachers employ reproachful language of those things which lie wholly beyond the reach of their vision
- Their knowledge was confined to the natural instincts, the impulses of appetite, and passion, and sensual pleasure
- They did not rise above them to the intelligent contemplation of those higher things, against which they used only the language of reproach
- The denunciation of woes, common in the Lord's ministry, is only found here in all the rest of the New Testament

Old and New Apostates (1:5-11)

- Living selfish lives, full of hate
- Like Balaam trying to make a gain of godliness
- Like Balaam they are false prophets
- Like Korah, who profanely thrust himself into the priesthood and perished, they intrude irreverently into holy places

Apostates Depraved and Doomed (1:12-15)

- It appears that these persons, unholy and impure as they were, still continued to have outward fellowship with the Church
- St. Jude rebukes most sharply with many other notes and marks, both their dishonesty or filthiness, and their sauciness, but especially, their vain bravery of words and vain pride, joining with it a grave and heavy threatening from an ancient prophecy of Enoch concerning the judgment to come
- They fed themselves, and not the flock, and were very impious and impudent, open and bare faced in their iniquities, neither fearing God nor regarding man
- Rainless clouds
- Fruitless, barren
- Doubly dead, hence, no hope of fruit

Apostates Depraved and Doomed (1:12-15)

- The image here seems to be, that they were noisy and bold in their professions, and were as wild and ungovernable in their passions as the billows of the sea
- What they impart is as unsubstantial and valueless as the foam of the ocean waves, and the result is in fact a proclamation of their own shame
- Men with so loud professions should produce much more
- Instead of moving on in a regular orbit, as lights to the world, bursting forth on the world like erratic comets, or rather, meteors of fire, with a strange glare, and then doomed to fall back again into the blackness of gloom

Apostates Depraved and Doomed (1:12-15)

- Enoch was the seventh patriarch, and is distinguished thus from Enoch, son of Cain, who was but the third from Adam; this appears plainly from the genealogy
- This prophecy of the holiest man of the antediluvian world might have been preserved by tradition
- It is found in the Book of Enoch, a work long lost, but recovered in modern times in Abyssinia
- Jude was familiar with the prophecy
- The men of God, from the beginning of the world, have declared the doom denounced on them

Apostates Predicted (1:16-19)

- They murmur at God's providence and complain of his laws
- The secret of their murmuring and complaining is the restless insatiability of their desires
- Their mouth speak great swelling words; both against God and men; and this may point at their boast of knowledge, their great ostentation of learning, their vain and empty doctrines, their high flights, their rhetorical style, and bombast language
- Being respecters of persons for the sake of self-interest
- All the flatterers of the rich are of this kind; and especially those who profess to be ministers of the Gospel, and who, for the sake of a more advantageous settlement or living, will soothe the rich even in their sins

Apostates Predicted (1:16-19)

- Instead of following those teachers and their corrupt doctrine, remember what Christ and his apostles have said; for they foretold the coming of such false teachers and impostors
- When St. Jude (Jde 1:17) entreats them to remember the words which were spoken by "the apostles," it is not necessarily to be inferred that he was not himself an apostle, for he is speaking of what was past, and there might have been a special reason why he should refer to something that they would distinctly remember which had been spoken by the "other" apostles on this point
- Who separate themselves from God and the communion of saints

Apostates Predicted (1:16-19)

- Living an animal rather than a spiritual life
- It is the habit of antichrists to separate themselves from the godly, because they are not governed by the Spirit of God: and contrariwise it is the habit of Christians to edify one another through godly prayers, both in faith and also in love, until the mercy of Christ appears to their full salvation

Maintain Your Life with God (1:20-23)

- building up yourselves—the opposite to the "separate themselves" (Jude 19): as "in the Holy Spirit" is opposed to "having not the Spirit."
- Having the most holy faith - the Gospel of our Lord Jesus, and the writings of his apostles, for your foundation; founding all your expectations on these, and seeking from the Christ who is their sum and substance; all the grace and glory ye need
- Holding fast the Divine influence which you have received, and under that influence making prayer and supplication to God
- The prayer that is not sent up through the influence of the Holy Spirit is never likely to reach heaven
- The Holy Spirit teaches what we are to pray for, and how

Maintain Your Life with God (1:20-23)

- By building up yourselves on your most holy faith, and praying in the Holy Ghost; for without this we shall soon lose the love of God
- For although they were to build themselves up, and to pray in the Holy Spirit, and keep themselves in the love of God, yet this building, praying, and keeping, cannot merit heaven; for, after all their diligence, earnestness, self-denial, watching, obedience, etc., they must look for the Mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ, to bring them to Eternal Life

Maintain Your Life with God (1:20-23)

- Those who "keep themselves" are likely to "save" others
- Among those who wander and go astray, the godly have to use this choice, that they handle some of them gently, and that others being even in the very flame, they endeavor to save with severe and sharp instruction of the present danger: yet so, that they do in such sort abhor the wicked and dishonest, that they avoid even the least thought of them
- "Hating even the garment defiled by the flesh", all the while abhorring their sins
- As garments of the apostles wrought miracles of good in healing, so the very garment of sinners metaphorically, that is, anything brought into contact with their pollution, is to be avoided

Glory to God (1:24-25)

- Who alone can preserve you from the contagion of sin, and preserve you from falling into any kind of error that might be prejudicial to the interests of your souls; and thus to present you faultless
- Not as those who never have been faulty, but as those who, but for God's mercy
- Where there is no sin, there will be no sorrow; where there is the perfection of holiness, there will be the perfection of joy
- God, Who alone can teach, who alone has declared the truth; that truth in which we now stand
- Not only glory forever and ever, but eternal and universal dominion

Conclusion

- How does St. Jude describe himself?
- What is the purpose for this book of St. Jude?
- Who were the recipients of this epistle?
- When was it written?
- Why is it so important to 'contend' for the 'delivered' faith?
- What incidents does St. Jude remind them of in verses?
- List the qualities of the false teachers are condemned in this epistle
- What counsel does St. Jude give to build oneself up in the faith?
- Why is this closing blessing especially significant for this church?